METALWORK AND MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

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ART, CRAFT AND TEXT

ESSAYS PRESENTED TO
JAMES W. ALLAN

EDITED BY

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MARIAM ROSSER-OWEN

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CONTENTS

Contributors ix

Introduction
Venetia Porter and Mariam Rosser-Owen 1

1 **The Principle of Parsimony and the Problem of the 'Mosul School of Metalwork'**
Julian Raby 11

PART 1 METALWORK FROM THE IRANIAN WORLD 87

2 **Metalwork and Fourteenth-century Persian Painting: a Footnote**
Teresa Fitzherbert 89

3 **The Die-engraver of Balkh (290/902–302/914)**
Luke Treadwell 99

4 **The Ugly Duckling of Iranian Metalwork? Initial Remarks on Qajar Copper and Copper-alloy Objects in the National Museums of Scotland**
Ulrike al-Khamis and Katherine Eremin 115

PART 2 IRAN AND INDIA 129

5 **Gilding, Inlay and the Mobility of Metallurgy: a Case of Fraud in Medieval Kashmir**
Finbarr Barry Flood 131

6 **A Tubular Bronze Object from Khurasan**
Lorenz Korn 143

7 **Persians Abroad: the Case of the Jami' Masjid of Gulbarga**
Robert Hillenbrand 155

PART 3 MAMLUK METALWORK IN FOCUS 169

8 **An Extraordinary Mamluk Casket in the Fitzwilliam Museum**
Rachel Ward 171

9 **A Mamluk Tray and its Journey to the V&A**
Tim Stanley 187

10 **Arabic Titles, Well-wishes and a Female Saint: a Mamluk Basin in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam**
Luitgard Mols 201

PART 4 EGYPT AND SYRIA: ARTEFACT AND TEXT 215

11 **A Bronze Tambourine Player**
Doris Behrens-Abouseif 217

12 **The Fatimid Bronze Hoard of Tiberias**
Elias Khamis 223

13 **A Group of Round Boxes from the Metal Hoard Found in Caesarea**
Ayala Lester 239

14 **Islamic Embroideries from Egypt: Shifts in Taste, Change in Status**
Ruth Barnes 253

15 **Metalworking in Damascus at the End of the Ottoman Period: an Analysis of the *Qāmūs al-Ṣināʿāt al-Shāmiyya***
Marcus Milwright 265

PART 5 THE ISLAMIC WEST 281

16 **A Bronze Pillar Lampstand from Petralia Sottana, Sicily**
Jeremy Johns 283

17 **The Metal Mounts on Andalusi Ivories: Initial Observations**
Mariam Rosser-Owen 301

18 **The Marble Spolia from the Badiʿ Palace in Marrakesh**
Nadia Erzini and Stephen Vernoit 317

PART 6 CERAMIC TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION 335

19 **Glaze-decorated Unglazed Wares**
Oliver Watson 337

20 **Pearl Cups Like the Moon: the Abbasid Reception of Chinese Ceramics and the Belitung Shipwreck**
Jessica Hallett 349

21 **Branding 'Tradition' in Contemporary Tin-glaze Pottery from Puebla**
Farzaneh Pirouz-Moussavi 363

PART 7 STUDIES IN LUSTREWARE 377

22 **The Lion, the Hare and Lustreware**
Fahmida Suleman 379

23 **Said el Sadr (1909–86) and Fatimid Lustreware: a Succession**
Alan Caiger-Smith 393

24 **Potter's Trail: an Abu Zayd Ewer in the Saint Louis Art Museum**
Oya Pancaroğlu 397

PART 8 PAINTING TRADITIONS AND CONTEMPORARY ART 411

25 **From the Workshops of New Julfa to the Court of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich: an Initial Look at Armenian Networks and the Mobility of Visual Culture**
Amy S. Landau 413

26 **Modern Palimpsests: What Defines a Fake?**
Emilie Savage-Smith 427

27 **'Neo-calligraphism' and its Different Varieties in Modern and Contemporary Iranian Art**
Hamid Keshmirshekan 441

28 ***Meem* 1958, by Siah Armajani**
Venetia Porter 461

Bibliography of James Allan's Publications 469
General Bibliography 473
Index 515

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…vessels so amazing, pleasing and precious that the like cannot be found except in the treasuries of kings…

John of Mardin (1125–66), Bishop of the Jazirah
(Quoted in Allan 1982: 17)

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INTRODUCTION

VENETIA PORTER AND MARIAM ROSSER-OWEN

Deep commitment to his family, his friends and his faith; immense scholarship, inspiring teacher, kindness, modesty – these are just a few of the things that one could say about James Allan, mentor and friend to so many of us.[1] His love of Islamic art and of the Middle East began with his Oxford degree in Oriental Studies (1966) which he followed with a DPhil (1976) entitled 'The Metalworking Industry of Iran in the Early Islamic Period', which was published as *Persian Metal Technology 700–1300AD* in 1979 and which is still the standard work on the subject. This interest in metalwork has served to define him as a scholar – his many articles and books are listed in the dedicated bibliography – but there has been much else besides: work on ceramics, on medieval Yemeni painted ceilings, architecture, iconography, not to mention his important interfaith work, which culminated in the exhibition *Pilgrimage* at the Ashmolean Museum in 2006, curated with Ruth Barnes and Crispin Branfoot. Most recently his remarkable book *The Art and Architecture of Twelver Shi'ism* (2012) is the result of a masterful set of Yarshater lectures given in 2007, and again sees him breaking new ground in the field. His research is characterised by a meticulous approach to whatever subject he tackles – inscriptions often play an important part – and the results are always innovative, readable and free of obfuscation.

On finishing his degree in 1966 he was immediately appointed curator of Islamic art in the Department of Eastern Art in the Ashmolean, becoming Keeper in 1991. As a university museum, teaching was also encouraged at the Ashmolean, and James began by offering a module in Islamic pottery as part of the Oriental Studies degree course.

In 1977 he started the MPhil in Islamic Art. I, Venetia, was his first student, and for two years we methodically went through all the main topics from Islamic architecture to painting, just the two of us in his office or in the Eastern Art Library. The handling of objects was a key element from the start and early 'field' trips included a visit to Alan Caiger-Smith to understand how lustre was made; and to the house of Gerald Reitlinger, filled with pots which ultimately came to the Ashmolean after the tragic fire that shortly preceded his death. As curator of Islamic art, James also played an important role in expanding the Ashmolean collection, and his reach went beyond classical Islamic art. He was intrigued by the work of modern artists, and started to acquire important works by artists such as Ali Omar Ermes. As such, he was also a pioneering figure in appreciating the importance of collecting the contemporary art of the Middle East.

In 1979 Julian Raby, James's first DPhil student, joined James in teaching Islamic art at Oxford, and the team became a powerhouse for the development of the field in Britain, especially when they were joined by Jeremy Johns in 1990. Students came in increasing numbers. They began the important periodical series *Oxford Studies in Islamic Art*, organised conferences and welcomed visiting scholars. In his support for the field, James's grant-giving role has also been all-important. He was much involved with the British Institute for Persian Studies, serving as its President between 2002 and 2006. But above all there has been his involvement with the Barakat Trust. Founded in 1987, James has been a board member from the outset, and Chair of the Academic Advisory Committee since 2003.

The Barakat Trust was the brainchild of Hamida Alireza and Shahnaz Bagherzade; together with James, Alastair Duncan (d.2007), Julian Raby and Teresa Fitzherbert they created something remarkable.[2] Barakat is now celebrating its twenty-fifth year, and that it still has the same board as at the beginning says everything about the vision, passion and commitment of this pioneering group.

Their initial idea was to provide grants to people from the region which actually produced Islamic art to do research, to understand their own cultural heritage, and crucially to be part of the international community of scholars – to be able to travel to conferences, learn new ideas and different methodologies, and to engage with colleagues face to face. On the other hand, Barakat helped students from 'the West' to travel to the countries they were studying, to have their eyes opened. Hamida Alireza describes James as the 'guiding light' behind the success of Barakat: 'He always sees the potential and helps to guide students towards that potential whatever their academic background. The result has been stars.'

The network of Barakat grantees is now completely international, based in about thirty countries. Since the first grants were issued in 1988 up to the end of 2011, Barakat has given out 476 grants, including a number for significant restoration projects. This

has allowed countless students and scholars across the international community to realise all the goals which Barakat aimed for at the beginning. A recent development has been cultural tours led by Barakat grantees, starting with those to Syria and Jordan, allowing the attendees to see the tangible results of their financial support for Barakat.

After 40 years of service, James left the Ashmolean in 2006, joining the Khalili Research Centre for the Art and Material Culture of the Middle East at Oxford University, established in 2005 and directed by Jeremy Johns. Yet more students are now able to benefit from James's knowledge. Hamida describes James as an amazing force in promoting the field of Islamic art, and that energy has inspired all who have worked with him. But while his scholarly achievements are many and his academic impact has been great, for Hamida his real legacy resides in his students, the tangible products of his strong commitment to his educational role in the field. To Hamida, James never let his students get away with anything less than their best, never compromising on his high academic standards. Many of James's former students would not be where they are today without his guidance and support, both on a supervisory and personal level. The list of contributors to this volume is but a snapshot of the far-flung international community of James's former students, and it is a striking testament to James's impact on so many people's lives that these very busy people have taken the time to honour him in this volume.

Contributors were asked to present articles that reflected all aspects of James's work and interests. We believe this has been achieved. The essays in this volume cover a wide range of topics, and we have chosen to reflect this through the book's thematic organisation. Though wide-ranging, all of these subjects have been touched by James in some way – through his guidance and advice on the work-in-progress of former students, through sharing his expertise with colleagues, through travels and conversations enjoyed, or through having broken new ground in his own research. Many of the contributors have chosen to write on an aspect of Islamic metalwork, including several for whom metalwork is normally rather outside their comfort zone, but this reflects the way in which each contributor has chosen to honour the important role of James in their academic formation. The fact that so many of the contributions are focused on a particular object, or based on detailed observation of an object or group of objects, also reflects James's influence – the handling sessions he led at the Ashmolean are particularly fondly remembered by many of his former students, for whom this was often their first encounter with the materiality and physicality of objects. The fact that so many of James's students have gone on to be museum curators is no accident.

The volume opens with a magisterial essay by Julian Raby on the 'Mosul School' of metalwork, which reviews the increasingly uncertain historiography that has grown up around these objects, and through close observation of stylistic and epigraphic evidence revisits the notion of a formalised school of metalworkers based at Mosul in

the thirteenth century. We are confident that this essay in itself will transform the ways in which art historians will view these objects in the future.

The first thematic section brings together articles relating to metalwork from the Iranian world, ranging from the tenth to nineteenth centuries. Teresa Fitzherbert's article follows from Raby's in looking at what the designs on metalwork can tell us about past production: in this case, she reviews key motifs on fourteenth-century inlaid metal objects to see if these might offer clues to the nature of court painting in what she terms 'the gap' between the fall of the Ilkhanids and the rise of Timur. Luke Treadwell takes us back in time to Balkh in the early tenth century, and offers a novel approach to the study of Islamic numismatics by looking at the evidence for craftsmanship in coinage, in particular through reconstructing the career of a particular die engraver. Ulrike al-Khamis and Katherine Eremin breathe new life into the study of Qajar metalwork by examining a selection of objects collected by the National Museums of Scotland in the late nineteenth century: they examine these objects from the point of view of collecting history and scientific analysis, and then set them into their cultural context by considering the testimony of contemporary travellers' accounts, which provide almost the only written evidence for the production and use of these objects.

The second section brings together articles which examine the artistic relationships between Iran and India, reflecting James's own deep interest in the Indo–Islamic cultural encounter. Finbarr Barry Flood and Lorenz Korn both situate themselves in medieval Khurasan and consider aspects of the rise of the inlaid metal industry through contacts with northern India. Flood reviews the textual evidence for the movement of inlaid metal objects from Kashmir and other Indic centres into the Ghaznavid and Ghurid realms, in particular discussing the implications of a stray anecdote for the movement of craftsmen with specific metallurgical skills. Korn takes a particular object, recently acquired by a collection in Bamberg, which he identifies as a ceremonial flywhisk derived from a pre-Islamic Indian object type which passed into Iranian material culture during the Ghaznavid period, where it enjoyed only a short life. Robert Hillenbrand evokes happy visits to monuments in James's company in his focus on the little-studied Friday Mosque of Gulbarga in the Deccan, reflecting on Iranian cultural influences in the region.

Part 3 brings together three articles which each focus in detail on a particular example of mid-fourteenth-century Mamluk metalwork. Rachel Ward revives the reputation of an unjustly neglected casket in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, and through close readings of its inscriptions is able to suggest a very specific date, place and function for this object. Tim Stanley revisits a splendid tray in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, previously only studied by James himself, again contextualising it through its inscriptions and decoration, but also discussing its afterlife in Venice and later as an early acquisition by the South Kensington Museum as an exemplar of good design. Luitgard

Mols takes a basin in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, decorated with the coats-of-arms of Elisabeth of Carinthia, wife of the King of Sicily, and examines the significance of its intriguing Latin inscription. All three articles reveal the close relationship between the Mamluks and Italy, where inlaid metalwork was already present in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

In Part 4, we remain in the geographical area of the Mamluks – Egypt and Syria – but take a diachronic perspective, looking back in time to the Fatimids and forward to the late Ottoman period. The first three articles are devoted to metalwork production during the Fatimid period: Doris Behrens-Abouseif focuses on a bronze figurine of a tambourine player in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, and suggests a date and a context for this intriguing object against the historical backdrop of the Fatimids' short-lived declaration of their caliphate in Baghdad. Elias Khamis and Ayala Lester both examine the range of metalwork objects encountered through the archaeological excavation of two hoards, at Tiberias and Caesarea respectively. The context of the Tiberias hoard was a metal workshop, and the publication of this important archaeological material contributes to a better understanding of how to identify Fatimid metalwork within the sometimes baffling context of shared Mediterranean forms and decoration. Ruth Barnes focuses on embroideries from the Fatimid to Mamluk periods which form part of the Newberry Collection at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, whose importance James recognised and actively promoted while Keeper of the Department of Eastern Art. Studying this outstanding collection from the perspective of scientific and technical analysis has allowed Barnes to draw intriguing conclusions about dating and shifts in technique and designs. Finally in this section, Marcus Milwright presents important insights into the nature of metalworking in Damascus at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through a detailed examination of *The Dictionary of Damascene Crafts*. This fascinating text offers information on the types of metal goods bought in Damascus and its hinterland, and the status of the groups involved in its production, at a crucial moment of political and economic transition. It suggests areas of continuity from medieval metalworking practices, the extinction of some craft skills, and the innovation of others under the Ottomans.

Part 5 turns to the western end of the Mediterranean, opening with an article by Jeremy Johns that focuses on a bronze candle-holder which is housed in a church in central Sicily, and employed every year in the ritual that ends the Easter vigil, but which may in fact be the most significant piece of metalwork to survive from the island's Islamic period. A physical and stylistic analysis of the candleholder places it in the medieval western Mediterranean tradition, and a historical discussion suggests how it found its way to a town so far from the capital. In her article, Mariam Rosser-Owen returns to the celebrated Córdoban ivories, but again offers a new perspective, discussing a

neglected aspect of these objects' decoration – their metal mounts. Considering scientific analysis of the mounts on ivories in the Victoria and Albert Museum, combined with a comparative stylistic analysis of mounts on the larger group of surviving ivories, as well as textual evidence for their function as containers for precious perfumes and cosmetics, Rosser-Owen is able to suggest that some of these mounts are original to the objects, and thereby advance our understanding of precious metalworking at the Andalusi Umayyad court. Nadia Erzini and Stephen Vernoit focus in their article on an area all too frequently neglected in Islamic art history – Morocco. They examine the construction of the lavish Badi' palace in Marrakesh by the Sa'dian ruler of the late sixteenth century, Ahmad al-Mansur, and the later spoliation of its rich marble elements by members of the 'Alawi dynasty, in a bid to draw a deliberate connection between themselves and the 'golden age' of the Sa'dian period.

In the next section we turn from a geographical arrangement to a focus on materials, in this case ceramics. In his essay, Oliver Watson re-evaluates the status and 'value' accorded to unglazed wares in Islamic art history, through a consideration of two groups of partially glazed ceramics made in different times and places – Abbasid Iraq and pre-Mongol Iran. In both cases, the glaze ingredients and designs employed relate to wares which have been considered highest-quality production: Basran blue-and-white, and Kashani *mina'i*. This puzzling relationship serves to remind us that we often do not stop to think about how objects were judged and valued by their original consumers. Jessica Hallett's article focuses on one of the groups touched on in Watson's discussion, the beginnings of fine glazed ceramic production in Abbasid Iraq. In particular, Hallett focuses on the stimulus provided by high-fired Chinese wares which began to be imported to the Abbasid heartlands on ships like that exemplified by the Belitung wreck. The spirit of innovation provided by these astonishing imports led Iraqi potters to invent the long-lasting technologies of tin-glaze, decoration in cobalt blue, and lustre. Finally in this section, Farzaneh Pirouz-Moussavi's article continues the discussion of two of these technologies – tin-glaze and blue – through their transfer to the New World by Spanish colonialists and the establishment of the pottery industry at Puebla in Mexico. In particular, Pirouz-Moussavi examines how the 'Puebla brand' has become a symbol of Mexican identity which is being deployed in interesting and innovative ways by contemporary Mexican potters.

The third of the technologies invented in Abbasid Iraq – lustre – forms the focus of Part 7. In her article, Fahmida Suleman focuses on lustre production under the Fatimids, taking an iconographical approach to the frequent representation of lions and hares, but innovatively placing these designs in the context of the popular literature of the age. Alan Caiger-Smith continues the theme of Fatimid lustreware by discussing how it provided the main source of inspiration for the twentieth-century Egyptian

potter Said el Sadr (1909–86). Caiger-Smith applies his potter's eye to some examples of el Sadr's rich body of work, as well as drawing on his own knowledge of el Sadr's personality and philosophies of craft to show how innovation and tradition need not be in opposition to each other. Lastly, Oya Pancaroğlu turns to the other great centre of lustre production, Kashan in medieval Iran, focusing on a lustre ewer in the St Louis Art Museum, newly identified as a work of the great lustre painter Abu Zayd. Analysing image and text together, Pancaroğlu shows that Abu Zayd himself composed the poetic quatrain that decorates this ewer, and raises intriguing questions about the level of cultural sophistication among the figures involved in producing fine ceramics in Iran at this period.

In the eighth and final section, we move into the realm of the visual arts, beginning with Amy Landau's intriguing discussion of the role of Armenian artists in the introduction of European styles into Persian painting traditions in the seventeenth century. It focuses on the career of Astuacatur, an Armenian painter who worked on the decoration of the Church of Holy Bethlehem in New Julfa, and who was sent by the Safavid shah to the Romanov court, where he formed one of a small community of foreign artists who introduced European modes of painting to Russia. Next, Emilie Savage-Smith presents a fascinating group of manuscript paintings, modern interpretations of earlier medical or scientific drawings, all of them painted over pages torn from earlier genuine manuscripts. A number of these 'modern palimpsests' have been recently collected by museums in England and the United States, and Savage-Smith asks how we should categorise such objects within the disciplines of our field.

The last two essays bring the volume into the realm of contemporary art. Hamid Keshmirshekan explores the ways in which calligraphy and calligraphic forms have been employed in Iranian painting since the 1960s, by reviewing the artistic expressions of the main practitioners of each movement. The 'image' of the Persian language has been used as a potent symbol of Iranian identity, and tensions between modernist and traditionalist approaches – 'letterists' on the one hand, calligraphers on the other – were enhanced by the Iranian Revolution. Nevertheless, Keshmirshekan shows that 'neo-calligraphism' is a vibrant artistic movement in Iran up to the present day. Finally, Venetia Porter analyses a modern work by Iranian artist Siah Armajani, now in the collections of the British Museum. This intriguing textile – produced in a brief phase which started before Armajani moved to the United States in 1960, after which he turned to conceptual art – manifests engagement with Iranian traditions including miniature painting, stories from the Qur'an, numerology, Shi'ism, Sufism, divination and magic. Porter presents an iconographical study and fittingly concludes the volume with an essay which seems to combine all of James's interests in one work of art.

It remains for us to thank a number of individuals and institutions who have made this book possible: His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani Programme for Islamic Art and Architecture, University of Oxford; the Khalili Research Centre for the Art and Material Culture of the Middle East, University of Oxford; and the Barakat Trust. We would also like to thank Jeremy Johns for being the backbone of this project, Ruth Barnes for being an early champion, and Iradj Bagherzade and the team at I.B.Tauris for taking on this volume. We would also like to thank Alexa Cooper and Nina Swaep for their help in preparing the bibliographies.

We also extend thanks to all the contributors, for taking the time to put together such interesting and important essays in James's honour, and for their patience throughout the process of pulling this volume together. We also very much regret the absence of certain other former students and colleagues who were not in the end able to contribute to the volume due to their important roles and many other commitments.

Last but not least, we thank James himself for his constant guidance, support and inspiration to all. When thinking about a nice poetic quote to use in the title of this book (an idea which did not, in the end, see the light), we read as many inscriptions from Islamic metalwork as we could find. There was something very appropriate about the way so many of them begin, 'this is what was made for the most noble authority, the honourable, the diligent, the wise…' Like a precious object of shining inlaid metalwork, we dedicate this book to James: 'may his victories be glorified and may God perpetuate his happiness and well-being'.[3]

PRACTICAL NOTES ON THE TEXT

All dates are AD/CE unless otherwise specified. Dates presented in the format xxx/xxxx are in the order AH/AD. We decided to keep transliteration to a minimum and have included it fully only when it was judged necessary for the intelligibility of a particular text.

All black and white illustrations are included within the body of the relevant articles and are numbered as figures, preceded by the chapter number. In addition there is a colour plate section in the middle of the book. Where an article refers to a colour illustration, this is indicated as, for example, 'Plate 1, 2' etc.

A full bibliography of James Allan's publications is included at the end of the volume – any references to publications by Allan cited throughout the volume will be found in that separate bibliography.

NOTES

1 We also thank Julian Raby for his help in preparing the Introduction.

2 What follows is based on a conversation between Mariam Rosser-Owen and Hamida Alireza on 19 May 2011.

3 Taken from the inscription on the lid of a late-fifteenth or early-sixteenth-century Mamluk lidded tray in the Museum of Ethnology, Munich, quoted in Behrens-Abouseif 2010.

1

THE PRINCIPLE OF PARSIMONY AND THE PROBLEM OF THE 'MOSUL SCHOOL OF METALWORK'

JULIAN RABY

Depuis un siècle, Mossoul est célèbre en Occident. Pour les bronzes qu'elle n'a pas créés.

A.S. Melikian-Chirvani 1974

The term 'Mosul metalwork' is reassuringly familiar, yet disconcertingly elusive.[1] In a generic sense it presents no issue, as it conjures up for any student of Islamic art images of thirteenth-century brass vessels in a limited range of distinctive forms, profusely inlaid with silver. It is the precision of the word 'Mosul' that creates unease, as no one seems any longer willing to specify which objects were made in Mosul and which elsewhere by artists who had emigrated from Mosul.[2] Scholars over the last fifty years have increasingly treated the issue of attribution with resignation or dubiety; few have been as brave as Souren Melikian-Chirvani and dismissed Mosul's claims altogether.[3]

Epigraphic, circumstantial and stylistic evidence exists, however, to permit a more positive stance, and to enable us to attribute a core group of documentary items to Mosul, and others to Damascus and to Cairo. While these can form the basis for further attributions on stylistic grounds, there is, I hope, enough presented here to begin to shape a picture of a metalwork 'school' in Mosul, and to identify one of the principal ways in which its techniques and styles were transmitted to Mamluk Cairo. I intend to show that this was a 'school' in multiple senses: relationships existed between artists who shared techniques, styles and motifs that they developed

over the course of more than half a century; and they transmitted these through apprenticeships; and there was a conscious sense of community that was expressed not only in the persistent use of the *nisbah* 'al-Mawsili', but in the use of at least one, if not two, identifying motifs.[4]

SHIFTING SCHOLARSHIP ON 'MOSUL METALWORK'

At first it seems almost perverse that there should be any uncertainty about inlaid metalworking in Mosul, as no other group of artefacts from the medieval Muslim world carries so much inscribed documentation, not even the contemporary ceramics of Kashan (see Table 1.1 on pp. 58–66).[5] Over the course of the thirteenth, and the first decades of the fourteenth centuries we have 35 metal objects signed by some 27 craftsmen who style themselves 'al-Mawsili'. And we have no less than eight with inscriptions stating that they were made in Mosul or for the ruler of Mosul or for members of his entourage. Current uncertainty is largely a reaction to the reductive assertion at the turn of the twentieth century that Mosul was the principal production centre of inlaid metalwork in the thirteenth century.

Silver-inlaid brasses of the first half of the thirteenth century were among the first Islamic *objets d'art* to be studied in Europe. Examples reached Europe at an early date, and were accessible, at least in Italy, well before the Orientalist fashion for scouring the bazaars of Egypt and the Levant from the mid-nineteenth century;[6] and, well before the emergence of art-historical studies, the objects offered iconographic and inscriptional challenges that attracted scholars who were historians, epigraphers and numismatists.

Scholarship on the subject began with the publication of an ideal marriage of a documentary object and literary documentation. In 1828 Joseph Toussaint Reinaud published the collection of the French royalist and antiquarian Pierre Louis Jean Casimir (Duc) de Blacas d'Aulps (1771–1839), which included the only item known – until recently – to record that it was produced in Mosul itself, the celebrated 'Blacas ewer' made in 1232.[7] Reinaud also translated the account by an Andalusian visitor to Mosul in 1250, Ibn Sa'id: 'Mosul… there are many crafts in the city, especially inlaid brass vessels which are exported to rulers.'[8] In the 1840s Reinaud's friend Michelangelo Lanci published several items of thirteenth-century inlaid metalwork, including the tray in Munich made for Badr al-Din Lu'lu', the ruler of Mosul.[9] Mosul's reputation was assured.

By the 1860s Mosul's precedence was being questioned. Claiming to have studied several hundred objects and to have found the names of some twenty artists, Henri Lavoix concluded that Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, Egypt, and unnamed cities on the

Mediterranean coast all produced inlaid metalwork. He provided no details, and tested credence by listing names and places like litanies, and by claiming he had seen works produced for a roll-call of famous twelfth-century rulers, works, incidentally, that have still to surface.[10] He adopted a more nuanced tone some fifteen years later, when he acknowledged that the artists of Mosul deserved an independent chapter in the history of Islamic art: their work, he said, can be distinguished by its figural imagery, whereas in Syria and Cairo the engraver's burin 'imprisons itself, by contrast, in ornament and lettering'.[11] Lavoix was the first to draw attention to a ewer made by Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Mawsili in Damascus in '659/1260'. He made little of this crucial discovery, however, and the object itself disappeared from scholarly sight for the next thirty years.[12]

Mosul was accorded precedence and primacy by Lavoix's numismatic colleague, Stanley Lane-Poole. Writing in the 1880s and 1890s,[13] he proposed a Syrian school that was intermediary between Mosul and Mamluk Cairo, but his arguments were slight, and his proposal tentative, especially as he knew nothing of the ewer made in Damascus.[14]

A critical point came in the first decade of the twentieth century, when Gaston Migeon's over-enthusiastic advocacy of Mosul provoked a stern reaction whose influence is still felt today.[15] In the space of eight years, from 1899 to 1907, Migeon reached out to a broad public, publishing a two-part article on 'Cuivres Arabes' in the generalist art journal *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, organising a major exhibition of Islamic art in Paris, and writing the first comprehensive introduction to Islamic *objets d'art*. In these he vaunted the role of Mosul, and claimed its production of inlaid metalware ran from the twelfth until the fifteenth century.[16]

He acknowledged in the article that his classification of inlaid metalwork was 'de peu doctrinal', but three years later – in the 1903 Palais Marsan exhibition – he adopted an even more doctrinaire classification, assigning the metalwork to three families: Mosul, Egypt and Persia. He recognised that other centres, such as Damascus, had competing claims, and tempered his schema with caveats, but his labels and captions were uncompromising.[17] To Mosul he attributed a farrago of items we now know were made in several different regions (Fig. 1.1).[18] The striking differences in technique, material and style must have been obvious to many visitors. Friedrich Sarre, a lender to the exhibition, expressed serious reservations.[19] Even a non-expert, the critic and historian of French eighteenth-century painting Virgile Josz, raised doubts about the classification.[20] Such unease may explain why one of the scholars who collaborated with Migeon on the Paris show, Max van Berchem, promptly wrote what amounts to a disclaimer.[21]

Van Berchem's classification seems at first even more rudimentary: his 'Oriental' group comprises works from Khurasan to Mosul, his 'Occidental' consists of items in the

FIG. 1.1 Gaston Migeon's attributions of metalwork to Mosul ('Art de Mossoul') in the album of photographs that accompanied the Paris 1903 Exhibition.

name of Ayyubid rulers of Syria and Egypt, a group he said might even already be 'syro-égyptien' – a prelude in other words to the presumed situation under the Mamluks.[22] The difference, however, is that van Berchem's approach was methodical, and based on a scrupulous reading of the epigraphic and historical evidence of works with documentary inscriptions, whereas Migeon's classification was an attempt to impose order on a large miscellany of objects, the majority of which lacked historical inscriptions.

Over the next three years van Berchem twice returned to the topic of Mosul metalwork, arguing that only six known silver-inlaid objects could be connected with Mosul itself, whereas many others must have been made in Syria and ultimately Cairo.[23] He countered Migeon's principal arguments in favour of Mosul: its access to regional copper mines, Ibn Sa'id's praise for Mosul metalwork, and the large number of items signed by artists who styled themselves 'al-Mawsili'. Van Berchem argued that other cities had access to those mines, and that the last two points merely testified to Mosul's fame as a metalwork centre. They did not justify treating all items in a comparable style as if they came from a geographically restricted 'school', a term that should be used with 'prudent reserve'.[24]

Van Berchem's studied caution had an immediate effect not only on his co-author Friedrich Sarre,[25] but on Migeon himself, who in 1907 dedicated his book on Islamic minor arts to van Berchem, and abandoned his three-part classification in favour of van Berchem's bipartite schema.[26] Nevertheless, the notion of a 'Mosul School' was hard

to dislodge, and Maurice Dimand[27] and Ernst Kühnel[28] used the term liberally in the scholarly and popular publications they produced between the two World Wars. This was more than a matter of tradition and convenience, and more than a default label because it was difficult to distinguish products from different centres.[29] It was based on what both considered to be positive evidence: the plethora of al-Mawsili signatures; and the frequent occurrence of a personification of Luna, a figure holding a crescent moon, which Dimand thought was probably the 'coat-of arms' of Badr al-Din Lu'lu', and Kühnel took to be an emblem of the city of Mosul, points we shall return to later.[30] Many previously unrecorded objects were published in the interwar period, when Gaston Wiet, among others, provided invaluable listings of metalwork in the name of Atabek, Ayyubid, Rasulid and Mamluk dedicatees.[31]

In 1945 Mehmed Ağa-Oğlu published a study on incense-burners, using detailed typological and decorative analysis to attribute groups to different regions of the Central Islamic Lands. In the process he made strong assertions, and often highly perceptive observations, about the style of both Mosul and Syrian inlaid metalwork, with the result that his work proved influential.[32] In his characterization of Mosul and Syrian work, 'The artists of Mosul were interested primarily in the general effect of inlaid decoration, and were less particular about the engraving of details. The inlaid metals of Syria, however, showed a marked tendency and a steadily increasing devotion of the artist to the difficult engraving of details, be it the pattern of a gown, the plumage of birds, or the fur of animals.'[33]

There were, however, problems with Ağa-Oğlu's method. He overlooked the admittedly few items carrying express documentation that they were made in Syria,[34] and instead made conclusions about a Syrian style based on several assumptions: that items with Christian imagery were from Syria; that the Barberini vase was 'most certainly from a Syrian atelier' as it bears the name of an Ayyubid ruler of Aleppo and Damascus; that a well-known incense-burner in the name of Muhammad ibn Qalawun was from Egypt but under Syrian influence; and that the Baptistère de St Louis was definitively from Syria. None of these assumptions are proven, though, and several illustrate a tendency to retroject onto the thirteenth century 'evidence' from the fourteenth; this is a particular problem given that Ağa-Oğlu tends to assume a static view of Mosul metalwork of the thirteenth century, whereas, as we shall see, it exhibited considerable stylistic change.

In the decade between 1949 and 1958 David Storm Rice transformed the study of Islamic inlaid metalwork with a series of articles in which he combined van Berchem's epigraphic exactitude with, as he termed it, 'searching' examination of individual objects – an examination that van Berchem had said was essential and that Ağa-Oğlu had shown was possible.[35] The results were magisterial, and have dominated the field for the last

half century. Rice's erudition and observation were not, however, always matched by his reasoning. What appear at first to be objective and inductive arguments seem coloured from the outset by scepticism.

The quotation marks in the title of his earliest article – 'The oldest dated "Mosul" candlestick' – are an instant signal of doubt that is clarified in the opening statement: 'The name "Mosul bronzes" is often given to an important group of medieval silver-inlaid Islamic brasses, although whether or not there was such a "school" still remains to be proved.'[36] By 1957, when he published his seminal article on the work of Ahmad al-Dhaki and his assistants, Rice was unwilling to attribute to Mosul any more than the six items van Berchem had granted it.[37]

Rice argued instead that over some two decades Ahmad al-Dhaki's workshop operated first in a 'Mesopotamian', then a 'Syro-Egyptian' style. Whatever it was, it was not a 'Mosul' style.[38] Rice pictured al-Dhaki moving from an Artuqid centre such as Amid (Diyarbakır) to Ayyubid Egypt or more likely Syria. His argument rested on epigraphic evidence purportedly relating to the patron, and art-historical evidence relating to technique, style and iconography. Issues abound with both lines of argument.

The attribution to 'Mesopotamia' – that is, to Amid rather than Mosul – rests entirely on Rice's interpretation of two graffiti on a candlestick now in Boston, dated 622/1225 and signed by (*'amal*) Abu Bakr ibn Hajji Jaldak, the *ghulam* of the *naqqash* Ahmad al-Dhaki al-Mawsili. It is not inscribed with the name of a patron, but is incised with two ownership marks, one that reads 'The pantry of Mas'ud [*al-tishtkhanah al-mas'udiyyah*]', the other *dar 'afif al-muzaffar*, which Rice translated as 'For the harem (*dār*) (under the supervision of) *'Afif al-Muzaffarī*'.[39] Rice connected this Mas'ud with Abu'l Fath Mawdud, the last Artuqid ruler of Amid, and suggested the candlestick 'may have been made in Amida itself'.[40] In the 1957 article he expanded the scenario by suggesting that the Muzaffar mentioned in the second graffito referred to the ruler of Hama who gave refuge to al-Malik al-Mas'ud after 1237. He might have added that an important figure in Hama in the period was 'Afif al-Din b. Marahil al-Salmani.[41]

Despite the coincidence of names, this was a tendentious argument for several reasons. First, these were not the only candidates, and this was not the only historical scenario. Second, the graffito referring to the pantry of al-Mas'ud does not prove that the candlestick was made for a Malik al-Mas'ud. Third, even if it was made for the last Artuqid ruler of Amid, this does not prove that the workshop was in Amid.

Other potential owners include al-Malik al-Mas'ud, who was the Ayyubid ruler of Yemen between 612 and 626 (1215 and 1228/9), but for no given reason Rice dismisses him as someone 'who might possibly, but *not probably*, have been the owner of the candlestick' (my italics).[42] Rice presumably restricted his search to princes ruling in 1225 when the candlestick was made, otherwise he might have mentioned al-Malik

al-Mas'ud who was the last sovereign of the Zangid line (d.1251), ruled Jazirat ibn 'Umar, and was the son-in-law of the overlord of Mosul, Badr al-Din Lu'lu'.[43]

As for 'Afif and his owner or patron, al-Muzaffar, there were several rulers in Hama with the regnal title of al-Malik al-Muzaffar and several in the Yemen, not to mention the Ayyubid Shihab al-Din Ghazi of Mayyafariqin (1220–44) and even one of Badr al-Din's own sons.[44] One could therefore imagine several different histories for this object, one connected to the family of Badr al-Din Lu'lu', another to the Rasulids of Yemen. Which is the correct hypothesis is unclear, but Rice's scenario seems an uncertain foundation on which to posit a workshop in Amid.

A second difficulty is that the graffito referring to al-Mas'ud does not *prove* that the candlestick was made for a Malik al-Mas'ud. It lacks the introductory phrase *bi-rasm* (for) which is found on almost all objects where a graffito refers to the person for whom the object was originally made. Neither of the graffiti on the Boston candlestick proves who the original owner was, let alone who commissioned the candlestick.[45]

Third, even if the candlestick was made for the last Artuqid ruler of Amid, a single commissioned object is scant reason on its own to argue that the 'workshop of Ibn Jaldak and his master was in Amida or in a place under the control of the Urtuqid branch of Hisn Kaifa-Amida'. In 1949 Rice acknowledged his arguments were 'admittedly hypothetical'; a decade later hypothesis had hardened into near certainty.[46]

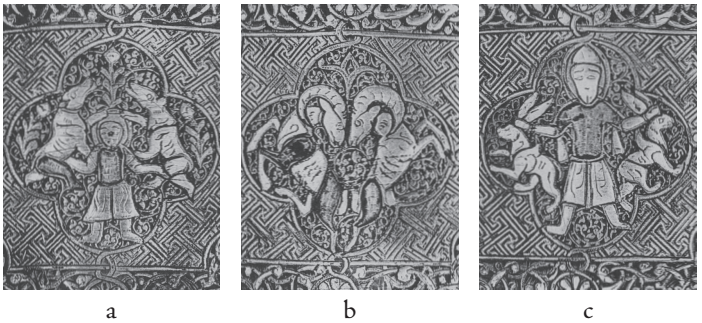
Rice attributed Ahmad al-Dhaki's later work to Syria or Egypt on the evidence of the basin that al-Dhaki made for the Ayyubid ruler al-Malik al-'Adil II.[47] Datable to between 1238 and 1240, almost two decades separates the Louvre basin from al-Dhaki's earliest surviving signed work, a ewer in Cleveland dated 622/1223, and from the earliest work by al-Dhaki's *ghulam*, the Boston candlestick of 1225. Rice pointed out differences in technique and style between these phases (Figs 1.2a and 1.2b), but his interpretations are problematic. He admits the technical differences might be 'a matter of chronology rather than geography,' but he attributes the differences in style to a change in geography – they 'denote an adaptation to Syro-Egyptian fashions'. For no given reason, then, the change in technique was a question of time, the change in style a question of location.[48]

An initial difficulty is that Rice provided no indubitably Syro-Egyptian object as a comparison.[49] Second, the items he principally compared to the Louvre basin were two he attributed to Mosul – the Blacas ewer and the Badr al-Din Lu'lu' tray in Munich. He juxtaposed details from the Munich tray and the Louvre basin, but it is hard to see why he claimed one was made in Mosul and the other was in an 'Ayyubid Syrian' style (Fig. 1.3). Conversely, he is silent on their similarities: each has a frieze of double-T frets interrupted by lobed medallions that occupy the full height of the frieze and that are set off by thin contour lines tied into the top and bottom of the frieze by small loops; and

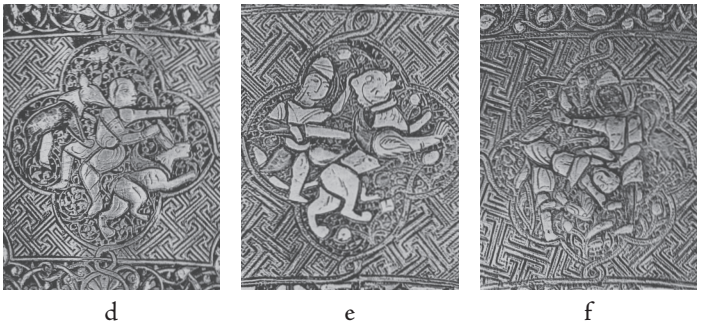
a

b

FIG. 1.2 *above* Changes in the style of Ahmad al-Dhaki's work over fifteen years: a) Cleveland ewer, dated 1223; b) Louvre basin, datable to 1238–40. Height of the medallions respectively 4cm and 5cm.



a b c



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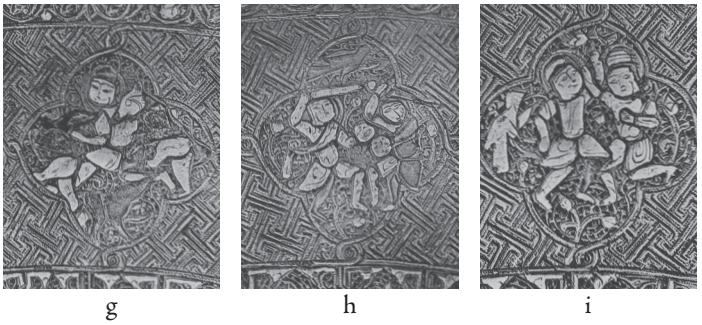


g h i

FIG. 1.3 *left* Rice's juxtaposition of medallions from Ahmad al-Dhaki's Louvre basin (a–d) and the Munich tray in the name of Badr al-Din Lu'lu' (e–i).

the medallions enclose human and animal figures against a scroll background which contrasts with the dense geometry of the frieze.

Rice did not illustrate the Blacas ewer, but it has similar geometric friezes interrupted by comparable figural medallions.[50] The Blacas medallions have twice as many lobes as those reproduced from the Louvre basin or the Munich tray (Figs 1.4a and 1.4b), but medallions with identical profiles to those on the Blacas ewer can be found on the inside of the Louvre basin (Figs 1.4c and 4d).[51] The stylistic distinction

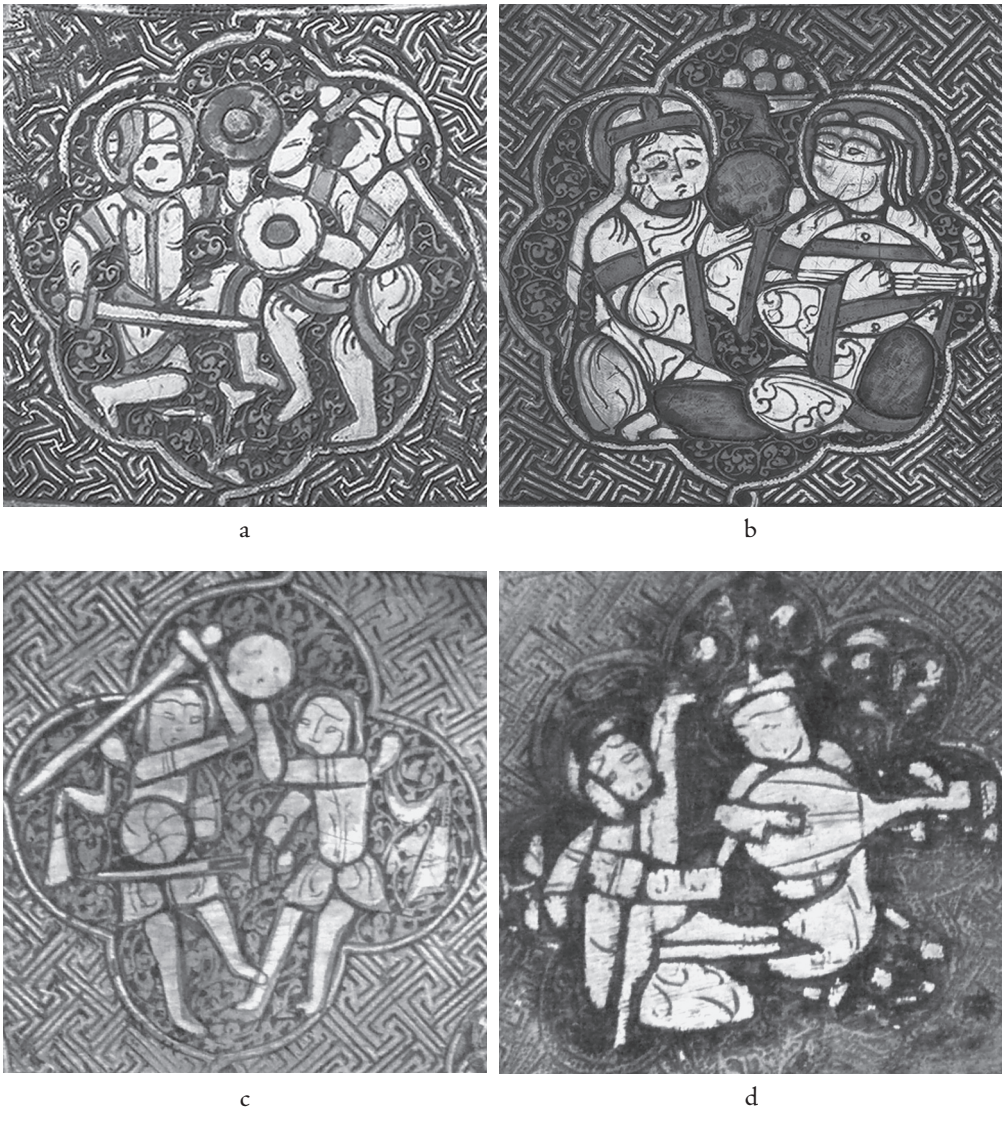


FIG. 1.4 Medallions from the 'Blacas' ewer, dated Mosul 1232 (a and b); the exterior and interior of Ahmad al-Dhaki's Louvre basin, datable to 1238–40 (c and d).

between the medallion friezes on these three object escapes me. There are differences in the drawing and detailing of the figures, and in the treatment of some of the background scrolls – as one would expect to find in the work of different craftsmen – but there is no justification for defining two broad stylistic groups attributable to two different regions.

Rice argued that Ahmad al-Dhaki worked in Amid and then in Syria (or Egypt), with no mention of Mosul. He decried the term 'Mosul School' as 'too specific and too narrow to be useful', and denied the existence of a 'Mosul style' as 'a suggestion which is not borne out by the facts'.[52] Yet he was postulating an 'Ayyubid Syrian' style largely from a single object made in the name of a ruler of Egypt and Syria, while denying that the same style might be from Mosul, even though it appeared on an object indubitably made in Mosul and on another made for the ruler of Mosul. This seems perverse, especially as the Blacas ewer preceded al-Dhaki's basin by almost a decade.

In summary, Rice's argument that al-Dhaki's basin is stylistically different from Mosul work is not convincing. He made valid observations about the differences between al-Dhaki's early and later work – between work from the 1220s and work from the late 1230s – but failed to prove they stemmed from a change in location rather than the passage of time. Rice's work warrants a critique because it has dominated the study of Atabek and Ayyubid metalwork for the last half century. In his sceptical stance on the role of Mosul as a metalworking centre, Rice was heir to van Berchem's circumspect approach, which had been provoked by Migeon's uncritical attributions.

* * *

Rice's initial premiss was doubt, and his case against a Mosul School was predicated on a faulty inference and a questionable deduction. The inference was that the graffiti on the Boston candlestick by a pupil of Ahmad al-Dhaki indicated that al-Dhaki himself was working in Amid/Diyarbakır. The deduction was that Ahmad al-Dhaki must have been working later in Syria (or Egypt) because the Louvre basin was dedicated to an Ayyubid who was briefly ruler of Egypt and of Syria.[53]

Rice and many others have tended to deduce provenance from two generalised assumptions. One is that a dedicatee's name indicates that he was the 'patron' of an object. In other words that he actively commissioned the item rather than passively received it.[54] By blithely referring to dedicatees as 'patrons,' we subconsciously ignore the possibility of gifts.

The second assumption is that Mawsili metalworkers were active where their patrons were located. Taken to its logical conclusion, this would mean that for every ruler for whom we have a surviving inlaid metal object there would have been a local

workshop. In an era when minor principalities proliferated, we would end up with no less than nine production centres, best illustrated in a map (Fig. 1.5). No one in the last half century has been prepared, it is true, to argue for this fully dispersed model of production; on the other hand, no one has proposed a fully centralised model, with Mosul as the sole production centre in the first half of the thirteenth century. The result is that we are left with six objects long accepted as having been produced in Mosul; Rice's tendentious attributions to a 'Syrian' school; and numerous 'orphan' objects with no specific attributions. We might do well to look for an alternative strategy.

In what follows I have adopted three of several possible strategies, though each deserves more attention than I can give it here. One is to see whether the documentary inscriptions on the metalwork reveal more than we have assumed. The second is to see whether stylistic criteria can be used to identify workshop groupings. The third is to look for stylistic relationships with other media known to have been produced in Mosul or its immediate environs.

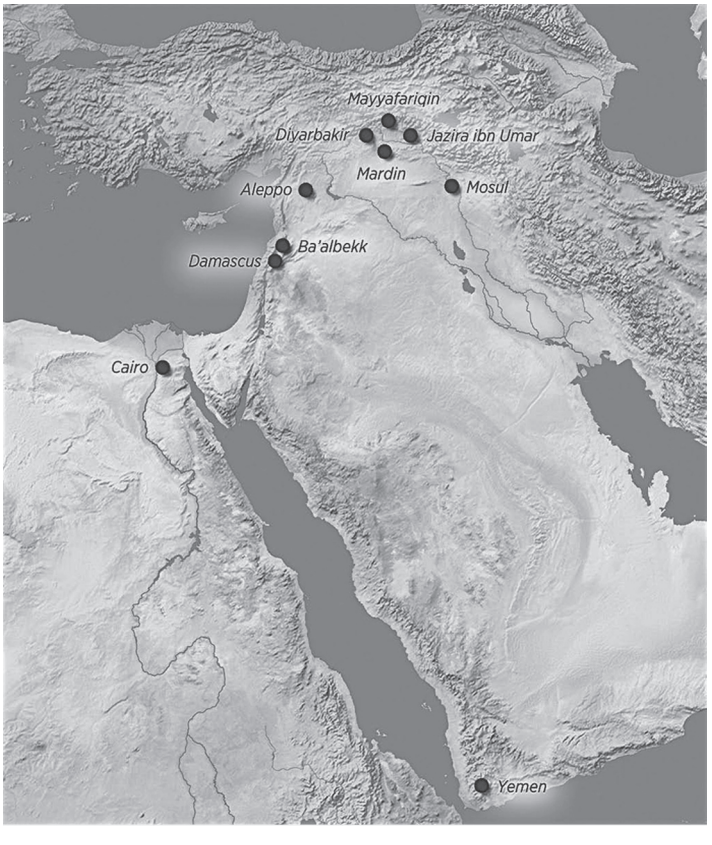


FIG. 1.5 A 'dispersed' model of production of Atabek, Ayyubid and Rasulid inlaid metalwork in the first half of the thirteenth century. Map by Robert Foy.

THE 'PRINCIPLE OF PARSIMONY'

We might begin by lancing the presumption of doubt engendered by van Berchem and Rice, by invoking the principle of parsimony, the precept that opposes more complex explanations when a simpler one will do.[55] In this case, why assume an unsubstantiated model of dispersed production when the simpler solution would be that much of the inlaid metalwork of the first half of the thirteenth century was produced in Mosul and exported?

This approach is supported by the express testimony of the Andalusian Ibn Sa'id who visited Mosul in 1250 and noted, 'There are many crafts in the city, especially inlaid brass vessels which are exported to rulers, as are the silken garments woven there.' As Rice observed, the phrase *tuhmal minha ila'l-muluk* means more 'than just "is exported." The expression indicates that the vessels were of high quality and fit for kings.' Rice therefore added a parenthesis to the translation – 'are exported (and presented) to rulers' – but he failed to pursue the implications.[56]

If Mosul exported metalwork commercially, why are we reluctant to attribute objects to Mosul? If Mosul exported metalwork as princely gifts, why do we presume that an object dedicated to the ruler of a rival city was produced there rather than in Mosul? Paradoxically, we assume a different model for the first half of the thirteenth century than for the second. In the 1290s the Mamluk sultan in Cairo ordered hundreds of candlesticks from Damascus, while an inlay workshop in Cairo was supplying metal objects, complete with individualised dedications, to the Rasulids in Yemen.[57] We are content then with the idea of exports from two centres of production in the late thirteenth century. Contrariwise, we tend towards a picture of dispersed production some half century or so earlier, even though we are told that Mosul exported metalware.

Metal craftsmen may well have emigrated from Mosul in the first half of the thirteenth century, but the first certain evidence dates from the 1250s.[58] By that decade at least one workshop was established in Damascus, and by the 1260s another in Cairo. In both the craftsmen signed themselves 'al-Mawsili'. A shift in the centres of production emerges clearly from Table 1.1a (pp. 58–62), which is an attempt at a comprehensive list of documentary inlaid metalwork from the Jazira, Syria and Egypt between 1200 and 1275.[59] Table 1.1b is a partial continuation which highlights (1) all the known items signed by Mawsili craftsmen over the subsequent fifty years, (2) all the items with certain provenance, and (3) for the period 1275–1325 a selection of the more important dedicatory objects.

Over the course of 125 years, starting in about 1200, we have 35 objects made by some 27 craftsmen who used the *nisbah* al-Mawsili.[60] This is a remarkably high ratio

of named artists to documentary objects. Of these 35, 28 are dated, of which four are scientific instruments. Eighty per cent of the objects signed by craftsmen who used the *nisbah* al-Mawsili can be assigned to between about 1220 and 1275, with the remaining 20 per cent from the next half century (Table 1.1b). Two objects are recorded to have been made in Mosul, but none after 1255. Excluding astrolabes, no silver-inlaid metalware is recorded to have been produced in Damascus or Cairo before 1257 and 1269 respectively. If we apply the principle of parsimony, the simplest explanation is that some craftsmen moved from Mosul to Syria in the middle of the thirteenth century. Our task is to see if this straightforward conclusion holds when we take a closer look at the evidence for all three centres.

PRODUCTION IN MOSUL: THE EVIDENCE FROM INSCRIPTIONS

The fifty years between van Berchem's and Rice's studies saw the publication of a large number of previously unknown objects signed by Mawsili craftsmen. Rice, however, accepted none of these as Mosul products, and adhered to the handful identified by van Berchem, namely the Blacas ewer and five items bearing the name and titles of Badr al-Din Lu'lu'. The last fifty years have seen several more Mawsili masters added to the roster, and one item inscribed as having been produced in Mosul, and I would suggest that over three times as many documentary objects can be linked to Mosul as van Berchem and Rice accepted – not six but 19.

Until recently the Blacas ewer was the sole object known to bear an inscription identifying it as a product of Mosul. In 1997 the David Collection in Copenhagen acquired a pen-box inlaid by 'Ali ibn Yahya in Mosul in 653/1255–56.[61] The artist is previously unrecorded, and his hand cannot immediately be detected on other known objects. No other works by the artist of the Blacas ewer, Shuja' ibn Man'a, are known either, and two objects with a stated Mosul origin may seem a small number on which to construct a 'Mosul School'. There is, however, biographical information, in particular relating to master–pupil relationships, that provides a fuller picture.

Shuja' ibn Man'a belonged to a family of considerable importance in Mosul in the first half of the thirteenth century.[62] Shuja' must have had a workshop with at least one assistant: Muhammad ibn Fattuh calls himself Shuja''s *ajir* (hireling) on a candlestick that he inlaid.[63] The candlestick was fashioned by al-Hajj Isma'il, but his affiliation, if any, with Shuja' is not mentioned. The candlestick is undated, but in terms of form and decoration a date in the 1230s seems fitting.[64] As Shuja' ibn Man'a was working in Mosul in 1232, that was presumably where Muhammad ibn Fattuh and al-Hajj Isma'il produced their candlestick; if they were working in another city, it would have been

curious for Muhammad ibn Fattuh to refer to his employer by name, whereas in Mosul Shuja' was presumably a celebrated practitioner.

Another Mawsili master with several recorded assistants was Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya. Isma'il ibn Ward identified himself as Ibrahim's *tilmidh* (pupil) on a box he decorated in 617/1220, and Qasim ibn 'Ali signs himself as Ibrahim's *ghulam* in 1232.[65] A fortunate item of evidence indicates that Isma'il was active in Mosul. On 6 February 1249 (20 Shawwal 646) he finished transcribing a copy of al-Baghawi's *Masabih al-Sunna*, signing himself Isma'il ibn Ward ibn 'Abdallah al-Naqqash al-Mawsili. Only four months later the manuscript was certified after a series of readings to religious scholars in Mosul, which makes it very likely that Isma'il was in Mosul when he copied the manuscript.[66] This does not prove that he was working in Mosul almost thirty years earlier, when, as a young pupil, he would have been in his teens. We can either surmise that he and his teacher were working in an unknown city, to where they must have moved from Mosul, as he refers to both himself and his teacher as Mawsili, and that he, with or without his teacher, later moved back to Mosul, or we can adopt a simpler solution: that Mosul was where Isma'il was trained, worked and transcribed his manuscript.[67] In that case, Mosul by extension becomes the workplace of Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya, and by further extension of Qasim ibn 'Ali.

Ismai'il ibn Ward was likely to have been active in Mosul for at least three decades. We have no other works signed by him using the *nasab* Ward, but it is conceivable that he was the al-Hajj Isma'il who produced the candlestick decorated by Muhammad ibn Fattuh.[68] Biographical information largely derived from their signed works suggests that out of some twenty Mawsili metalworkers active before 1275 at least eight – or, if Isma'il ibn Ward and al-Hajj Isma'il were two different individuals, nine – were operating in Mosul. Two testify to the fact; in the case of Isma'il ibn Ward the evidence is circumstantial; in the case of the others the evidence is contingent; in the case of Ahmad al-Dhaki the evidence, as we shall see shortly, comes from a distinctive motif.[69]

Inscriptions bearing the name of the recipient provide further evidence. Five items universally accepted as work from Mosul are the three trays, a candlestick (Fig. 1.6), and a box carrying the name and titles of Badr al-Din Lu'lu'. None of these items records the date or place of manufacture, but one, a tray in the Victoria and Albert Museum, bears a graffito confirming it was destined for Badr al-Din's commissariat. In addition, two items can be connected to members of Badr al-Din's court. One is a bowl in Bologna that was a calque on a well-known contemporary ceramic shape from Kashan or Raqqa. It was made for a Najm al-Din al-Badri. Rice acknowledged that Najm al-Din's *nisbah* made it likely he was an officer of Badr al-Din Lu'lu', and he even wondered whether his name Najm, which translates as star, was connected to the Badr (moon) of his master. Yet no one has stated the obvious: if we accept that the metalwork made for Badr

FIG. 1.6 Candlestick in the name of Badr al-Din Lu'lu', presumably Mosul, 1230s or 1240s. St Petersburg, Hermitage Museum.

al-Din Lu'lu' was produced in Mosul, why not assume the same for a bowl made for one of his officers?[70]

The second item is a candlestick in the Louvre that has largely been overlooked (Fig. 1.7).[71] Inside the footring it bears two graffiti: one reads 'By order of the buttery of Amir Sayf, son [son?] of the Lord of Mosul' (*bi-rasm sharāb khānāh almīr [sic] sayf [?] ibn ibn [sic] ṣāḥib al-Mawṣil*); the other 'Sharaf the Coppersmith [*Sharaf (?) al-naḥḥās*]'. Sharaf could have been the maker, as Leo Mayer suggested, but I would be cautious about including him in the roster of Mawsili craftsmen, as his name is not prefaced by the equivalent of *fecit*. The name on its own may indicate that Sharaf was a subsequent owner of the candlestick. In contrast, the use of the phrase *bi-rasm* in the other graffito suggests that the object was made for a member of the ruling household, and that it has almost as good a claim to be a product of Mosul as the items inscribed in the name of Badr al-Din.

Another purported craftsman is Muhammad ibn 'Isun, whose name appears on its own in a small cartouche on the front of the great tray in Munich inscribed with the names and titles of Badr al-Din Lu'lu'. Muhammad ibn 'Isun's name is inlaid in a similar script to the main inscription, but is anomalous in its isolation and brevity. Two of the most eminent epigraphers, Max van Berchem and Moritz Sobernheim, took him to be the craftsman, but I would agree with Rice and advise caution, as the cartouche lacks

FIG. 1.7 Candlestick, with a graffito in the name of the '… Son of the Lord of Mosul'. Paris, Louvre Museum.

any equivalent of *fecit*.[72] There is a formal, inlaid inscription – not a graffito – on the back of the tray recording that Badr al-Din had the object made for a princess entitled Khatun Khawanrah,[73] and I wonder if Muhammad ibn 'Isun might not have been the groom. This could explain two of the graffiti on the back of the tray. One indicates that it was made for the buttery of a courtier of Badr al-Din (*bi-rasm sharāb khānāh al-badrī*).[74] The other is in the name of al-Hasan ibn 'Isun, which puzzled both van Berchem and Sobernheim; however, if Muhammad ibn 'Isun was the groom, ownership of the tray might have passed to his brother.[75]

I would not, therefore, propose adding the name of either Sharaf or Muhammad ibn 'Isun to the roster of Mosuli metalworkers. On the other hand, the basin in Kiev which bears the name and titles of Badr al-Din Lu'lu' appears to have a signature partially deciphered by Kratchkovskaya as '… Yusuf'. She was unaware of any artist with this name, but, as Oleg Grabar pointed out, the ewer in the Walters Art Gallery is signed by Yunus ibn Yusuf al-Mawsili. The ewer does not mention a patron's name, nor where it was made, but it is dated 644/1246–47, which falls within the dates of Badr al-Din's admittedly long rule (1233–59).[76] If the maker of the Kiev basin and

the Walters ewer were one and the same person, that would surely help localise the ewer to Mosul.[77] The basin can be dated to the latter part of Badr al-Din's reign on the basis of the titles used, and it and the ewer certainly belong to the same stylistic period, with a common use of both arabesque and T-fret grounds; and several figures on both objects have awkwardly thin arms. Nonetheless, I would caution against too hastily assuming they were made by the same craftsman: though the Kiev basin is in very poor condition, it is still evident that the outlines of the figures are uneven, whereas those on the Walters ewer maintain a much firmer line.

Curiously, few of the objects signed by Mawsili craftsmen in the first half of the thirteenth century bear personalised dedications (Table 1.1a). One is the geomantic table by Muhammad ibn Khutlukh, but no one has yet identified the patron. Another is Ahmad al-Dhaki's Louvre basin made for al-Malik al-'Adil II Sayf al-Din Abu Bakr. The third is the ewer – now in the Freer Gallery of Art – made in 1232 by Qasim ibn 'Ali, Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya's *ghulam*. In this case signature and dedication appear to offer contradictory evidence about where the object was made.

The ewer is inscribed in the name of a Shihab al-Din, who has plausibly been identified as Shihab al-Din Tughril, the regent for the young Ayyubid sultan of Aleppo, al-Malik al-'Aziz Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad (r.1216–37). On the traditional assumption that the domicile of the dedicatee indicates where the object was made, Qasim ibn 'Ali is alleged to have been active in Aleppo, or at least Syria.[78] However, Qasim ibn 'Ali's association – via Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya – with Isma'il ibn Ward points to Qasim ibn 'Ali working in Mosul. By 1232 he could have moved to Aleppo. Alternatively, the ewer may have been made for Shihab al-Din Tughril as a gift or commission, and produced in Mosul.

The ewer is afigural, which was unusual for the period, and it may have been designed for ritual ablutions or in deference to Shihab al-Din's well-attested religious scrupulosity.[79] It was produced in Ramadan of 629, a year after Shihab al-Din had stepped down from the regency and handed the reins of government to al-Malik al-'Aziz; it was, in fact, the very month he was obliged to hand over his estates and castle at Tell Bashir to the young sultan, who was surprised at how small Shihab al-Din's treasury was; and it was some 16 months before he died.[80] Ramadan 629 was also the month when al-Malik al-'Aziz's bride arrived from Cairo.

None of this allows us to determine whether the ewer was personally ordered by Shihab al-Din,[81] or by someone who was well aware of Shihab al-Din's preferences. The manner in which the inscription refers to Shihab al-Din as ascetic, devout and god-fearing might suggest that the ewer was a gift from someone who admired his piety, rather than that it was an expression of self-satisfaction. The wording (*al-zāhid, al-'ābid, al-wari'*) is distinctive, and is not found on any published item of metalwork except one.

This is the bowl in the name of Najm al-Din al-Badri, where he is described as *al-amīr al-kabīr* and *zayn al-ḥajj*, which may mean that he was in charge of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Precisely the same epithets are used in the same order on both the Shihab al-Din ewer and the Najm al-Din al-Badri bowl, suggesting they were a formula rather than a special commission.[82] As Najm al-Din is identified as a member of Badr al-Din's court, the implication is, first, that the ewer and the bowl were produced in Mosul, and, second, that they were presentation items rather than commissions.

In the case of the ewer we cannot even rule out Badr al-Din Lu'lu' himself as the donor. Despite continuing struggles with the princes of Aleppo, he had strong contacts with the city, and might even have wished to earn the goodwill of the former regent at a time when he was effectively being marginalised.[83] Indeed, Badr al-Din Lu'lu' and Shihab al-Din Tughril were both patrons of 'Izz al-Din ibn al-Athir, who was effectively Badr al-Din's court historian,[84] and Ibn Khallikan records that towards the end of 626/November 1229 he saw Ibn al-Athir staying at Shihab al-Din's residence in Aleppo as his guest.[85]

Contrary to common assumption, then, the ewer could have been made in Mosul,[86] whereas it is somewhat unlikely it was made in Aleppo when there is no independent proof – such as literary references, inscriptions or craftsmen's *nisbah*s – and no subsequent evidence from the Mamluk period that Aleppo ever produced inlaid metalwork,[87] though the son of al-Malik al-'Aziz, al-Nasir II Salah al-Din Yusuf (b.1230; r. Aleppo 1237–60) did build a metalwork market near the Great Mosque.[88] Damascus, by contrast, certainly became a centre of metal inlay, but the earliest evidence, apart from an astrolabe, dates almost thirty years later than the Freer ewer. The earliest dated inlaid vessels that record a Damascus manufacture are a candlestick of 1257 and a ewer of 1259, the latter, intriguingly, also connected with al-Nasir II Yusuf (Table 1.1a).

Badr al-Din did make gifts of metalware: he is recorded to have presented a metal candlestick every year to the Mashhad 'Ali, though it was of gold, not inlaid brass, and weighed 1000 dinars.[89] He may have given gold objects to secular recipients too, but the Munich tray is proof that he gave inlaid metalwork. We should therefore allow the possibility that he presented inlaid metalwork as diplomatic gifts, and that Mosul could have been the source for some of the items that carry the names of Ayyubid princes. Gifts served many purposes: they could be a gesture of submission in sporadic instances, or on a recurrent basis the equivalent of tribute; they could be blandishments and bribes; they could be a form of reward, or one of the many niceties of the diplomatic protocol of the Muslim world. Badr al-Din used gifts in all these modalities.

Badr al-Din was not famed for his military victories, yet he managed to stay in power for almost half a century, despite pressures from local Jaziran rivals, the Ayyubids of Syria and Egypt, the Seljuks of Rum, not to mention the tidal wave of eastern invaders,

first the Khwarazmians and then the Mongols. He achieved this longevity through a policy of appeasement and frequent realignments with the great powers. His *realpolitik* is borne out by his scatter of marriage alliances, and by the changing allegiances that appear on his coinage.[90] Gifts too played their part, and it would have been natural if Badr al-Din had used Mosul's luxury products, such as its textiles and inlaid metalwork, to lubricate his diplomatic efforts.[91]

For example, in the course of two years Badr al-Din lavished gifts on al-Malik al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub, the son of the ruler of Egypt, al-Malik al-Kamil. In this time the gifts went from the placatory to the celebratory. In 635/1237–38 Badr al-Din used presents to try to dissuade al-Malik al-Salih from encouraging the dreaded Khwarazmians to make raids on his territory – to no avail. In 636, following al-Malik al-Kamil's death and al-Malik al-Salih's takeover of Damascus, the two erstwhile foes were on the best of terms and Badr al-Din sent forty mamluks and 'horses, and clothes, garments, gold and dirhems. He sent [this][*sic*] to apologize for his previous behavior. These two kings became as one after great hostility. Between them a friendship arose which could hardly be interrupted.'[92] No express reference is made to metalwork among the presents, but it was very possible such objects were included. In the intervening period al-Malik al-Salih had persuaded the Khwarazmians to attack Badr al-Din, and he fled, abandoning his treasure and baggage train. There was evidently a surfeit of inlaid metalwork, because items were being sold at a fraction of their normal cost – Sibt ibn al-Jawzi (d.1256) says that an inlaid pen-box worth 200 dirhams sold for a mere 5 dirhams, a ewer and basin for 20.[93] If so much inlaid metalwork was available among Badr al-Din's possessions, it may have played a common role in his gift-giving. This, of course, raises questions about whether any, or all, of the four known items in al-Malik al-Salih's name might have been commissioned by Badr al-Din as gifts.

Even in the case of a ruler such as al-Malik al-Nasir II Salah al-Din Yusuf, for whom, as we have seen, a ewer was produced in Damascus in 1259, we cannot rule out the possibility that other known objects in his name – the Barberini vase in the Louvre and a large basin in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (Table 1.1a) – might have been made in Mosul. In 649/1251, for example, Badr al-Din Lu'lu' sent al-Nasir Yusuf in Damascus gifts worth 20,000 dinars, which Ibn Shaddad described as 'horses, cloth, and articles'. The nature of those 'articles' is not specified, but the word *al-ālāt* could certainly comprise inlaid brasses, as it is used in this sense by al-Maqrizi, describing a market in Cairo.[94]

While the possibility of gifts makes the issue of the provenance of items with dedicatory inscriptions more complicated than scholars have previously assumed, several different forms of inscriptional evidence suggest that at least 14 items, some signed by craftsmen who used the *nisbah* al-Mawsili, some bearing the name of Badr al-Din Lu'lu' or figures associated with his court, can be linked to Mosul with differing

degrees of probability: Table 1.2a (p. 67) comprises items with inscriptions that provide direct, contingent or circumstantial evidence of a connection with Mosul. Table 1.2b includes five works by Ahmad al-Dhaki and his assistant Ibn Jaldak. Their inscriptions are not sufficient to prove that Ahmad al-Dhaki and Ibn Jaldak worked in Mosul, but several features link their work to items with a strong connection to Mosul.

One of these is the remarkable similarity in size and, above all, form between the ewers produced by Ahmad al-Dhaki in 1223 and Qasim ibn ʿAli in 1232, a similarity that extends to their cast handles (Fig. 1.8).[95] Another is a highly distinctive motif – an octagon filled with a complex geometry – that occurs on Ibn Jaldak's two known works and al-Dhaki's 1238–40 basin, and on two core items in the Mosul corpus, the Blacas ewer and the Munich tray. We have already seen that these last two are stylistically close to Ahmad al-Dhaki's basin.

This octagon appears on at least thirteen items over the course of three decades from the 1220s to the 1240s (Fig. 1.9) (Table 1.2a–c). It does not occur, to my knowledge, on any other published metalwork of the thirteenth century. The manner in which it

a b

FIG. 1.8 Ewers produced by (a) Ahmad al-Dhaki, dated 1223 (b) Qasim ibn ʿAli, dated 1232. Respectively, Cleveland Museum of Art and Freer Gallery of Art.

often interrupts the flow of the design arguably makes it look more like a 'brand' than an integrated decorative motif. This is the case on the Blacas ewer, for example, and on an incense-burner in the British Museum dated 1242–43 which has a conspicuous example of the octagon on its lid. If the octagon functioned as workshop mark, perhaps as a mark of master-craftsmanship, it would be one of the most important diagnostics of the prime phase of Mosul inlaid metalwork.[96]

The octagon connects signed and unsigned objects. It occurs, for example, on the candlestick made by Dawud ibn Salama in 646/1248–49, and, though most of the silver

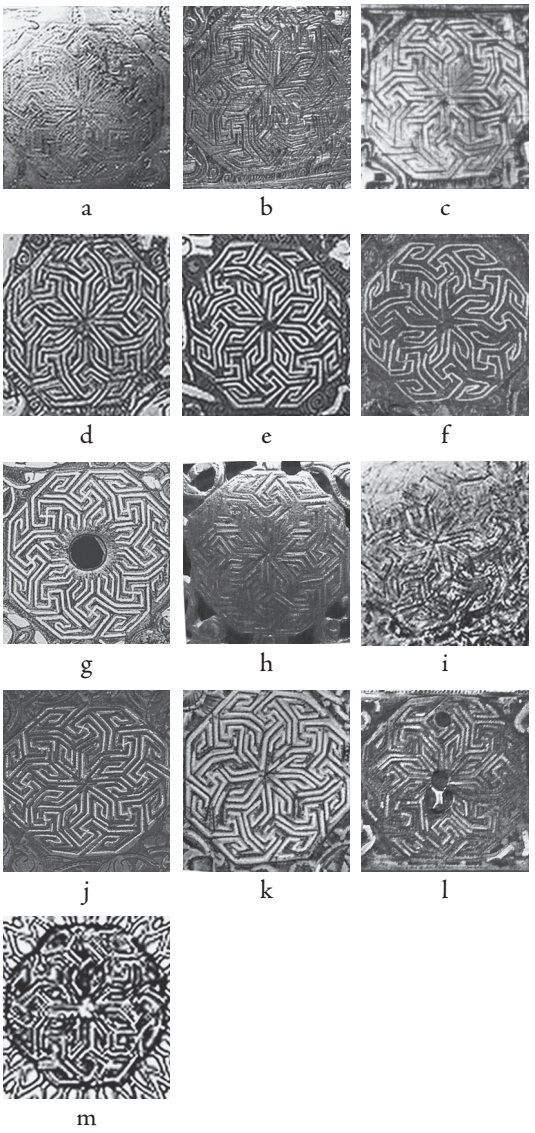


FIG. 1.9 Octagon motif, identified here as a possible workshop or guild emblem, found on (a) candlestick by Abu Bakr b. al-Hajj Jaldak al-Mawsili, 1225. MFA Boston (b) candlestick, c.1225–30. MIA Doha (cf. Fig. 1.25d–f and note 145) (c) candlestick. Nasser D.Khalili Collection (see note 138) (d) candlestick. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (cf. Figs 1.20 and 1.21) (e) 'Blacas' ewer by Shuja' ibn Man'a al-Mawsili, 1232. British Museum (f) tray with titles of Badr al-Din Lu'lu'. Munich Staatliches Museum für Volkerkunde (g) box. Sold London, Christie's 2011 (see note 96) (h) incense-burner, 1242. British Museum (i) basin by Ahmad al-Dhaki. Louvre (j) ewer by Yunus ibn Yusuf al-Mawsili. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum (k) candlestick by Dawud b. Salama al-Mawsili, 1248. Louvre Museum (l) pen-box by Abu'l Qasim b. Sa'd b. Muhammad. Louvre Museum (m) jug made for Isma'il ibn Ahmad al-Wasiti. After Rice 1957b.

inlay of the figures has been replaced, this object has a clear stylistic link with the later work of Ahmad al-Dhaki (Figs 1.13a and 1.13b).[97] The octagon also occurs on three impressive candlesticks which lack documentary inscriptions. Two of these have strong links to the work of Ibn Jaldak,[98] while the third, as we shall see later, has figurative decoration that can be related to painting from Mosul (Figs 1.20 and 1.21). The octagon connects about half of the principal artists who call themselves al-Mawsili between 1200 and 1250: Ahmad al-Dhaki, Ibn Jaldak, Shuja' ibn Man'a, Dawud ibn Salama, and Yunus ibn Yusuf, artists who belong to what we might term the second phase or generation of Mosul metalwork (Fig. 1.11). The exceptions include Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya, who belongs to the first phase, and members of his workshop.[99] Others are Muhammad ibn Khutlukh and Iyas, who may have been less closely linked to the main group of metalworkers in that their primary focus was scientific instruments,[100] and Husayn al-Hakim ibn Mas'ud.[101] There is no documentary evidence to connect Husayn to the main group either, but his only known work, a jug that came to light in the last few years, has scenes whose iconography and style are intimately linked to works that bear the octagon, such as a candlestick in the Metropolitan Museum and the ewer by Yunus ibn Yusuf (Fig. 1.20).[102]

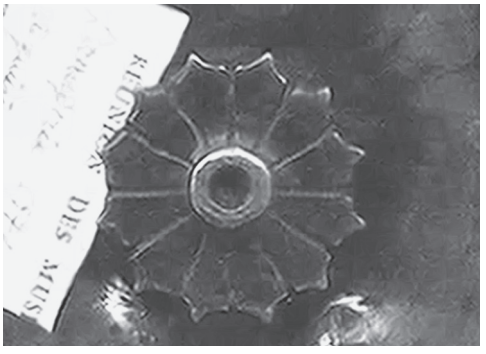
Intriguingly, the octagon seems to disappear from use after 1250. It does not occur on objects made by al-Mawsili metalworkers documented to have worked outside Mosul. Nor is it used by 'Ali ibn Yahya, who records that the pen-box he decorated was made in Mosul in 653/1255–56. The evidence suggests that, at least for the first half of the thirteenth century, the octagon may be a sufficient – but not necessary – indicator that an object was made in Mosul.

Another feature that occurs on those two key items – the Blacas ewer and the Munich tray – is a figure holding a crescent moon, used not as part of an astrological cycle, but on its own. This motif recurs on many metal objects, and it has been the focus of controversy, as some scholars, notably Dimand and Kühnel, claimed it as diagnostic of Mosul work, seeing it either as the badge of Badr al-Din himself, though Badr means full moon, or as an emblem of the city of Mosul.[103] This was a view sternly rejected by Ağa-Oğlu and then by Rice. Both produced about five similar counter-arguments, and Rice triumphantly concluded, 'These last shattering revelations should suffice in themselves to dismiss once and for all the thought that it is possible to attribute an inlaid brass to Mosul at the mere sight of the "Moon figure" in its ornamentation.'[104] It is not possible here to go into details, but none of Ağa-Oğlu's or Rice's arguments survive close scrutiny. However, unlike the octagon, the independent personification of the moon continued to be used well into the fourteenth century, and can also be found on work by *émigré* Mawsili craftsmen. It is still to be determined, then, what import this motif had for metalwork in the first half of the thirteenth century.

The octagon, on the other hand, suggests a stronger association between the principal Mawsili metalworkers in the first half of the thirteenth century than the inscriptional evidence alone indicates, and this is supported by a feature that has been largely overlooked – a rosette, with ten or twelve leaves, that is sculpted in relief on the base of several ewers and on the underneath of the shaft of two candlesticks (Fig. 1.10). The sequence of examples extends over some forty years. The two by Ahmad al-Dhaki illustrate a degree of change which is understandable given the fact that they are separated by some twenty years. The last example, the rosette on the candlestick made by Dawud ibn Salama in 646/1248–49, looks a rather depressed descendant at the end of a fine lineage.

It is perhaps not surprising that this rosette has been overlooked, as it is not normally visible. While it makes sense on a ewer, providing a nice visual accent when the ewer is tilted to pour, it serves no purpose on a large candlestick that would rarely be seen tilted or upended. As the rosette served no practical purpose, it was understandable that it got abandoned: it does not occur on the ewers by Yunus ibn Yusuf al-Mawsili (644/1246–47) or 'Ali ibn 'Abdallah al-Mawsili, and does not occur, to my knowledge, on any Mamluk ewers. It was, like the octagon, an idiosyncrasy of the first half of the thirteenth century, and an idiosyncrasy of the same group of craftsmen.[105] Unlike 'Morelli's earlobes', the octagon and the relief rosette were not an unconscious signal of a workshop's practice; instead they seem to have been deliberate devices – one visible, the other rarely seen. They required consummate, but very different, skills, and an expenditure of time. This suggests that they were a craftsman's flourish, and together these two seemingly minor features indicate a much closer relationship between the majority of al-Mawsili metalworkers in the first half of the thirteenth century than has previously been assumed. This can be best appreciated in graphic form (Fig. 1.11).

This chart suggests that Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya may have been a seminal figure, even if neither he nor members of his workshop used the octagon. His influence can be detected in the benedictory inscriptions that are often dismissed as banal because they consist of generalised good wishes and contain no documentary data. Nevertheless, they can still be informative when the vocabulary and phraseology are distinctive. The same or similar combinations of blessings and epithets occur on Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya's ewer, Isma'il ibn Ward's box, two candlesticks attributable to the 1220s – one by Abu Bakr ibn Hajji Jaldak, the other a candlestick with crusader figures on it (Fig. 1.25) – the ewer by Qasim ibn 'Ali, the jug by Husayn al-Hakim ibn Mas'ud, and the candlestick by Dawud ibn Salama, to name just those it has been possible to confirm. The wording is ornate compared to most later examples, though more such inscriptions need to be recorded before a definitive picture emerges.[106] This epigraphic connection is valuable in that it directly links Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya's work to at least four items that carry the octagon motif (See Figs 1.9, 1.11 and Table 1.2a–c).



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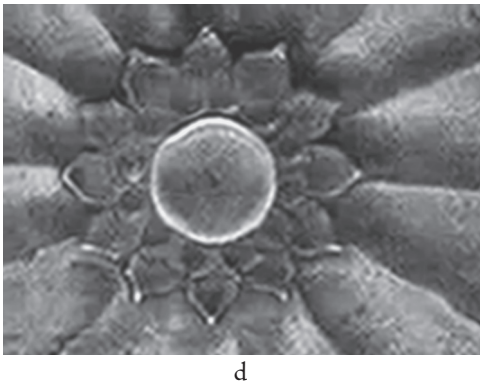

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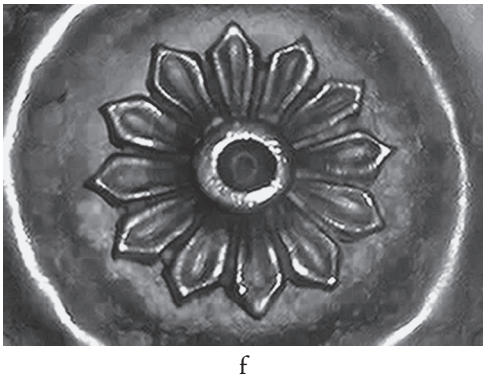


f

g

FIG. 1.10 Relief rosettes decorating the base of ewers and candlesticks (a) Ibrahim b. Mawaliya ewer, c.1200–10. Louvre Museum (b) Ahmad b. 'Umar al-Dhaki ewer, 1223. Cleveland Museum of Art (c) Abu Bakr b. al-Hajj Jaldak candlestick, 1225. MFA Boston (d) 'Umar ibn Hajji Jaldak ewer, 1226. Metropolitan Museum of Art (e) Shuja' ibn Man'a ewer, 1232. British Museum (f) Ahmad b. 'Umar al-Dhaki 'Homberg' ewer, 1242. Keir Collection, on loan to Berlin MIK (g) Dawud b. Salama candlestick, 1248. Louvre Museum.

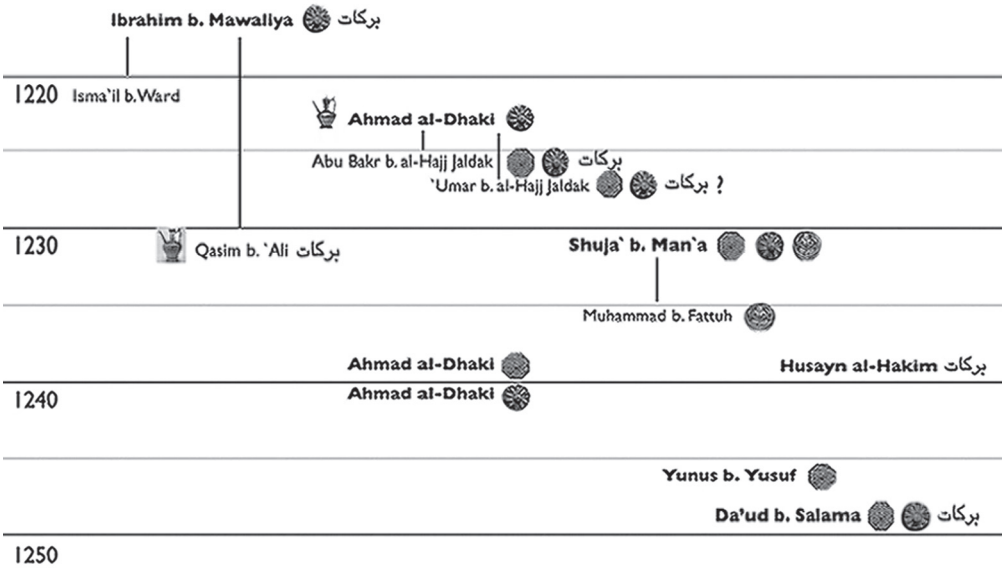


FIG. 1.11 Chart of a selection of Mawsili craftsmen thought to have worked in Mosul in the first half of the thirteenth century, showing their affiliations, where known, and their use of comparable features: relief rosettes, octagons, moon figures and similar 'banal inscriptions'.

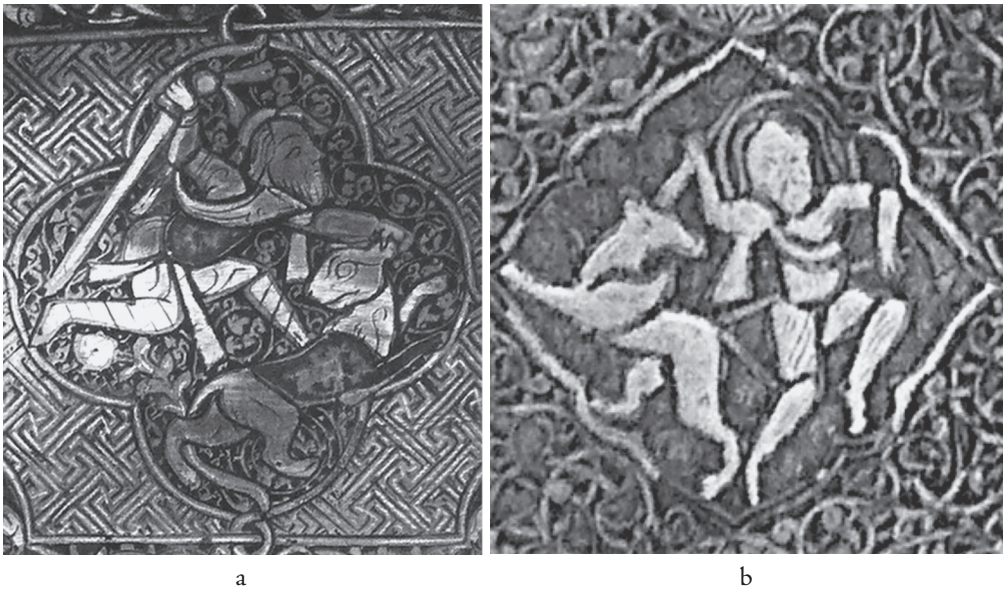
The chart also suggests that Ahmad al-Dhaki's workshop was intimately connected to others in Mosul, and that, wherever he may finally have worked, he was surely not in Amid/Diyarbakır in the 1220s, as Rice proposed.[107]

If we return to Table 1.1a, we see that it covers the period from about 1200 to 1275, which is three-fifths of the 125-year period for which we have the names of al-Mawsili metalworkers. Similarities can be observed often in minor details, but the overall impression is one of diversity and invention – many hands and many styles. Such diversity is not surprising given several factors. One is that there was a high number of different makers who styled themselves al-Mawsili between about 1200 and 1275, and for most of these we know only a single documented object. Second, work from even the same workshop differed considerably over time, as is the case with Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya's and Ahmad al-Dhaki's ateliers (Fig. 1.2). Major differences in style can be detected from the 1220s and 1230s, for example. Nonetheless, most of the complex compositions in this list display an approach Richard Ettinghausen eloquently described as 'the monophonic co-ordination of equal parts has been replaced by a polyphonic form, of graded subordination, in which the many different parts of a complex composition are made to interact and interrelate'.[108] This hypotactic system is replaced by a simpler paratactic structure on two items on the list, the candlestick in

a b

FIG. 1.12 Medallions showing figure reclining on a raised couch (a) al-Dhaki ewer, dated 1223. Cleveland Museum of Art (b) candlestick, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no 1891 91.1.563 (see note 107).

FIG. 1.13 Medallions from (a) Ahmad al-Dhaki's Louvre basin datable to 1238–40 and (b) Dawud ibn Salama's Louvre candlestick, dated 646/1248–49.



a b

the name of Badr al-Din Lu'lu' and the candlestick signed by Muhammad ibn Fattuh (Figs 1.6 and 1.19).

There are marked contrasts between the documentary metalwork of the first 75 years of the thirteenth century (Table 1.1a) and that of the succeeding 25 (Table 1.1b). In the second period, which coincided with the ascendancy of the Mamluks and the Mongols, few items exist in the name of a sovereign; in lieu of Mosul as the attested place of manufacture, we have Damascus and Cairo; instead of a plethora of different signatures, several of the most productive artists appear to belong to a single family. Appropriately, then, in place of the stylistic diversity of the first 75 years, there are strong stylistic connections between the work of these family relatives, and, intriguingly, their preferred approach to composition is paratactic rather than hypotactic.

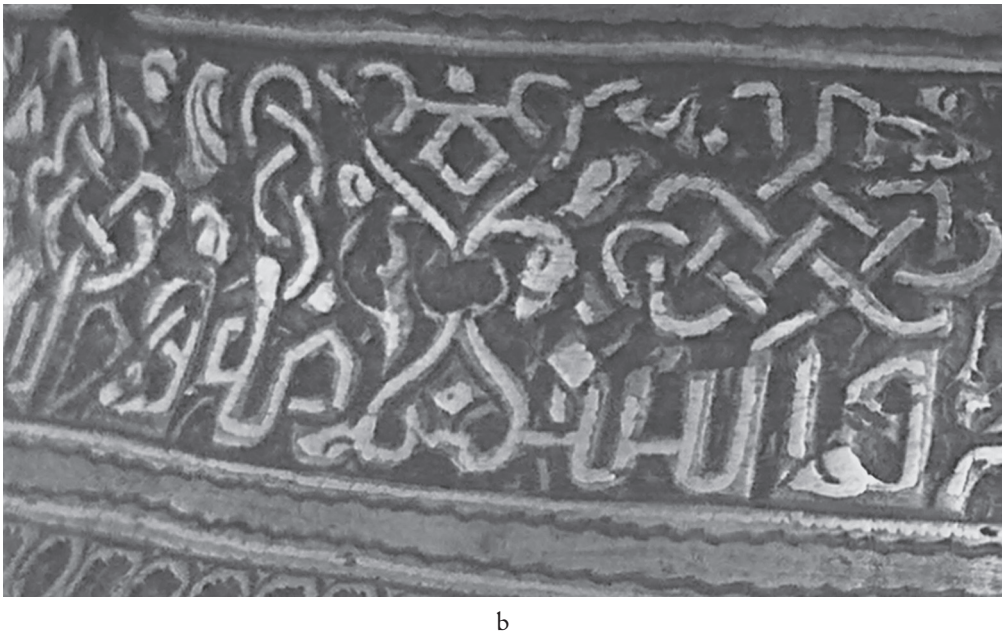
Even a brief review of inlaid metalwork produced in Damascus and Cairo in the second half of the thirteenth century enables us, on the one hand, to distinguish these products from most earlier work by Mawsili artists, and, on the other, to identify a link to a specific artist who worked in Mosul in the first part of the century. The link, as we shall see, is not just artistic, and cautions us against assuming there was a wholesale movement of metalworkers from Mosul to Syria and Egypt in the mid-thirteenth century.

PRODUCTION IN DAMASCUS AND CAIRO: THE EVIDENCE FROM INSCRIPTIONS AND STYLES

Metalwork was certainly being inlaid in Damascus in the 1250s, and in Cairo by the late 1260s. We know the names of five Mawsili craftsmen based in Damascus or Cairo in the second half of the thirteenth century (see Table 1.3 on p. 68).

We can see numerous connections in these artists' works – there are links between objects produced in the 1250s and the 1290s, and links between objects produced in Damascus and objects produced in Cairo (Fig. 1.15a–d). Such connections are not surprising given that at least three, if not four, of the makers were almost certainly from the same family, different generations of which worked in Damascus and in Cairo. Although none of the patronymics are unusual, Husayn ibn Muhammad of Damascus is generally thought to have been the father of 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn Muhammad. From his name alone, we cannot be certain that Muhammad ibn Hasan was a relative, but the decoration on his one documented work strongly suggests a relationship.[109] While there is nothing to indicate that 'Ali ibn Kasirat was a blood relative of the other four artists, his work shows affinities, and he too might have been shi'ite.

a



b

FIG. 1.14 Knotted Kufic frieze inscriptions on (a) candlestick produced by Husayn b. Muhammad al-Mawsili in Damascus in 655/1257–58; MIA Doha (b) a ewer produced by his son (?) ʿAli b. Husayn b. Muhammad al-Mawsili in Cairo in 674/1275–6; Louvre Museum, Paris.

The earliest documented silver-inlaid vessels from Damascus are Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Mawsili's work from the late 1250s. There was evidently continuity in Damascus in the second half of the century, as Husayn's work can be linked to candlesticks produced in the 1290s by two inscriptional features: the primary *thulth-muhaqqaq* calligraphy and the secondary friezes of 'knotted Kufic' punctuated by roundels (Figs 1.14–1.16).[110] James Allan has attributed the candlesticks to Damascus, on the twin grounds that one of them was produced by 'Ali ibn Kasirat in Damascus for the *mihrab* which Sultan Lajin (r.1296–99) renovated in Ibn Tulun's mosque in Cairo, and that Damascus was so noted for its candlesticks in this period that Sultan Ashraf Khalil placed an order for 150 of them to be sent to Cairo in 1293.[111]

The earliest known silver-inlaid work from Cairo is a candlestick by Muhammad ibn Hasan dated 1269, its inscription suggesting he had recently died, evidently before he completed the work. The key figure for early Mamluk metalwork from Cairo is 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Mawsili. One can only surmise that he had moved to Cairo from Damascus, where his father was working several decades earlier. Two objects 'Ali ibn Husayn produced in the 1280s illustrate, on the one hand, his dependence on a style that originated in Mosul half a century earlier, and, on the other, his adoption of a different, what we can call early Mamluk, idiom.

FIG. 1.15 Narrow friezes of knotted Kufic inscriptions on candlesticks (a) inlaid by Muhammad ibn Fattuh, probably in Mosul in the 1230s. MIA Cairo (b) produced by Husain b. Muhammad in Damascus in 1257. MIA Doha (c) produced for Katbugha between 1294 and 1296. MIA Cairo (d) produced for Sunqur al-Takriti before 1298. MIA Cairo.

a

b

c

FIG. 1.16 Comparison of *thulth-muhaqqaq* inscriptions on candlesticks (a) (d) produced by Husayn b. Muhammad in Damascus in 1257. MIA Doha (b) (e) produced by ʿAli b. Kasirat in Damascus for the *mihrab* of Lajin in 1296. MIA Cairo (c) (f) dedicated to Badr al-Din Lul'lu. St Petersburg, Hermitage.

d

e

f

The difference is most obvious in the decoration of the ground. On his candlestick of 681/1282–3 'Ali ibn Husayn used the double-T-fret found, for example, on the Blacas ewer and Badr al-Din's tray in Munich. On the basin he made in 684/1285–86 he covered the ground with a small-scale Y-fret pattern. This form of Y-fret proves to be a prime characteristic of work by 'Ali ibn Husayn's family: it barely features in the first half of the century, with one notable exception we will come to, and is then used sparingly on the neck of the candlesticks by Husayn ibn Muhammad (Damascus 1257), and Muhammad ibn Hasan (Cairo 1269) before its liberal employment by 'Ali ibn Husayn.

The Y-fret is a diagnostic of early Mamluk metalwork. Together with other features we can identify several subgroups, and a broad and tentative chronology.

First, the use of wide, undecorated bands to create zonal divisions and to create a contrast to an often dense ground can be associated with the third quarter of the century.[112] These bands feature on a basin bearing the titles of a dignitary associated with two short-lived Mamluk sultans, al-Mansur Nur al-Din (r.1257–59) and al-Muzaffar Sayf al-Din Qutuz (r.1259–60),[113] as well as on a tray made for Amir Qulunjaq some time between 1264 and 1277.[114] They also occur on a tray made for the Rasulid ruler Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Dunya wa'l-Din Yusuf I, though his long reign (647–94/1250–95) does not aid the dating of this type.[115]

Second, a variant approach in which fields of dense decoration are contrasted with larger undecorated zones occurs on basins in Baltimore and Doha. One of the few documentary examples is a tray in the Metropolitan Museum that was also made for the Rasulid al-Malik al-Muzaffar Yusuf I. Although his extended rule makes it feasible that this group dates, as has been suggested, to the middle of the century, I would intuitively date it somewhat later, to the 1270s or 1280s.[116]

Third, the Y-fret occurs in selected areas on the tray made for Qulunjaq (1264–77),[117] and on a candlestick in Lyon in the name of the Rasulid al-Muzaffar Yusuf I.[118] Over time its use became more extensive. By the last quarter of the thirteenth century the Y-fret was being used as an overall ground: it occurs on 'Ali ibn Husayn's basin of 1285, as well as on a basin in Boston which bears an extended dedication to Sultan Qalawun (r.1280–90).[119]

Linking several objects in these different groups is the motif of an eagle attacking a long-billed duck (Fig. 1.17). It occurs, for example, on the basin in Doha, on 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn Muhammad's ewer of 1275, and, more prominently, on his 1285 basin. This motif was certainly not 'Ali ibn Husayn's invention.[120] Nonetheless, it becomes a feature of this family's work, and the duck's long bill is distinctive.

In general, 'Ali ibn Husayn's works display a notable lack of dynamism in their compositions. This applies to both the 1282 candlestick with the Mosul-style T-fret and the 1285 basin with the Y-fret ground. On the candlestick he populated the body

with a rigid network of round and lobed medallions so close in size that the effect is one of stasis rather than movement.[121] The composition of his 1285 basin relies on large figurative roundels linked by small roundels filled with the eagle-and-duck motif, but the contrast in size does not produce the dynamic interchange of the hypotactic compositions on many earlier al-Mawsili products.

A marked change occurs in the late thirteenth century in the work of Husayn ibn Ahmad ibn Husayn, who employed a more linear, fluid style, with large-scale figures under the influence of a graphic tradition.[122] This marked a new departure in Mamluk metalwork that culminated, I suspect, in the figural style of the Baptistère de St Louis.

This family's output was seminal for later Mamluk metalwork, initiating, it seems, two of the most characteristic features of fourteenth-century Mamluk metalwork: large-scale inscriptional candlesticks (1257),[123] and large multi-lobed medallions with a wide border that eventually became filled with flying ducks.[124]

This family's products also connect back to Mosul in the first half of the thirteenth century. Several of the diagnostics occur on the candlestick inlaid by Muhammad ibn Fattuh when he was the hireling of Shuja' ibn Man'a: the Y-fret, the Kufic border inscription (Fig. 1.15), the eagle-and-duck roundel, and the duck with a long bill (Fig. 1.17) – the eagle-and-duck motif occupying a small but prominent position in the centre of some of the large multi-lobed medallions.[125]

a b

FIG. 1.17 Eagle and duck motif on (a) basin produced by 'Ali b. Husayn al-Mawsili in 684/1285–86, presumably in Cairo. Louvre Museum, Paris (b) candlestick made by Hajj Isma'il and inlaid by Muhammad b. Fattuh, attributed here to Mosul 1230s. MIA Cairo.

a b

FIG. 1.18 Arabesques against a whorl-scroll ground on (a) candlestick in the name of Badr al-Din Lu'lu': St Petersburg, Hermitage (b) ewer produced by Husain b. Muhammad in Damascus in 1259. Paris, Louvre Museum.

This family's work also links to the candlestick in the name of Badr al-Din Lu'lu' (Fig. 1.6), which has a form of arabesque – against a background of tight whorls – that relates to those on the 1259 Damascus ewer (Fig. 1.18); a style of *thulth-muhaqqaq* that prefaces the inscriptions on the Damascus candlesticks (Fig. 1.16);[126] and a paratactic composition with a *semée* of small, independent figural roundels with a broad, plain frame. The resemblances are not strong enough to assert that Badr al-Din's candlestick was made by Husayn ibn Muhammad, but it seems closer to his work than to Muhammad ibn Fattuh's or any other known Mawsili metalworker working in the second quarter of the thirteenth century. Compositional simplicity can be seen to be a feature of this family's work at least until the 1290s, and Muhammad ibn Fattuh's candlestick and the Badr al-Din Lu'lu' candlestick are compositionally among the simplest of the large-scale works attributable to Mosul, and rather far from what Ettinghausen described as 'graded subordination'.

One scenario, then, is that Muhammad ibn Fattuh, who worked in Mosul in the 1230s, was the father of Husayn ibn Muhammad, who may have worked in Mosul in

FIG. 1.19 Candlestick made by Hajj Isma'il and inlaid by Muhammad ibn Fattuh, here attributed to Mosul, 1230s. Cairo MIA.

the second quarter of the century but was certainly in Damascus in the 1250s; and the grandfather of 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn Muhammad, who was in Cairo by the mid-1270s at the latest; and the great grandfather of Husayn ibn Ahmad ibn Husayn, who was active at the turn of the next century, producing a major work for the Rasulid Sultan al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad Hizabr al-Din Dawud b. Yusuf (r.1296–1321).[127]

The imprint of this family's style can be found on many of the known major works attributable to Cairo and Damascus in the second half of the thirteenth century, and, while it is possible that there were other Mawsili craftsmen who emigrated to Syria and Egypt, the only two documented before the fourteenth century are Muhammad ibn Khutlukh and 'Ali ibn Kasirat, and the latter's inscriptional style suggests that he was part of this family's milieu. We should be cautious, then, about assuming a large-scale exodus of craftsmen from Mosul to the Mamluks.

PRODUCTION IN MOSUL: THE EVIDENCE FROM MINIATURE PAINTING

Objects with documentary inscriptions attest to a variety of craftsmen and styles from the first sixty years of the thirteenth century, and a more narrow concentration of artists and styles in the succeeding three decades. They reveal, however, only part

of the picture. The names of the craftsmen who made the majority of the surviving objects will probably never be known, though in some cases anonymous objects can be linked to named artists, as James Allan has shown in attributing the ewer in the name of Abu'l-Qasim Mahmud ibn Sanjarshah to Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya's workshop, which he located in Mosul on the evidence that connects Isma'il ibn Ward to the city.[128] As a further example one can cite a candlestick in the British Museum which may have been decorated by Muhammad ibn Fattuh. These two examples merely underline how much remains to be done on particularities of style.[129]

Likewise, a detailed study of forms will surely reveal affinities between objects we can assign with confidence to Mosul and objects with no documentary evidence. Even a small detail such as a cast openwork finial on a candlestick recently acquired by the Burrell Collection in Glasgow can prove a clue.[130] The only other known candlestick on which such finials appear was made for Badr al-Din Lu'lu' (Fig. 1.6). They point, then, to a Mosul provenance for the Burrell candlestick. This object in turn affiliates a candlestick in the Louvre which has very similar decoration, but lacks the finials.[131]

Another approach – the third of our principal strategies – is to compare works by the Mawsili masters not to other metalwork, but to miniature painting from Mosul. D.S. Rice believed that the 'indebtedness of the metalworkers to the miniature painters is most evident' in works by Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya and by Ibn Jaldak from the 1220s which had comparatively small-scale cartouches with figures executed against a plain background in an outline style with relatively little surface modelling, and that this phase was superseded by a more ornamental approach.[132] In fact, in the second quarter of the thirteenth century several objects were decorated in a large-scale figural style that parallels miniature painting, and the use of plain backgrounds is not a vital criterion.

Rice and others have cited parallels with manuscripts such as the Paris *Kitab al-Diryaq* of 1199 or the undated copy of the same work in Vienna, but the precise provenance of these manuscripts remains to be settled. While they were likely produced in the Jazira, it is not certain if it was in Mosul itself. A more useful comparison is with the six surviving frontispieces to the 20-volume set of the *Kitab al-Aghani* that was made for Badr al-Din Lu'lu' in the late 1210s, when he was still Regent but in the process of usurping power.[133] Iconographic parallels exist between these frontispieces and the small-scale figures on the early works studied by Rice,[134] but the scale is too small for detailed stylistic comparison. On the slightly later group of metalwork with large-scale figures, style and iconography combine to make a strong case for a Mosul provenance. Two examples will have to suffice here.

One is a candlestick in the Metropolitan Museum which has depictions of an enthroned ruler in both a frontal, and a three-quarter, pose.[135] Excellent parallels exist

in the *Kitab al-Aghani* for both (Figs 1.20 and 1.21). The ruler wears a similar *toque*, his face is elongated and he has a long, full beard, which is a distinguishing feature of several of the images of Badr al-Din in the *Kitab al-Aghani*.[136] The second example is a candlestick in the British Museum which has several friezes of standing courtiers that recall those on the frontispiece of volume XIX of the *Kitab al-Aghani* (Fig. 1.22).[137] The rather fey pose of one of the courtiers on the candlestick compares nicely with that found on two of the other frontispieces. These close connections between metalwork and manuscript allow us to attribute both these candlesticks to Mosul.[138]

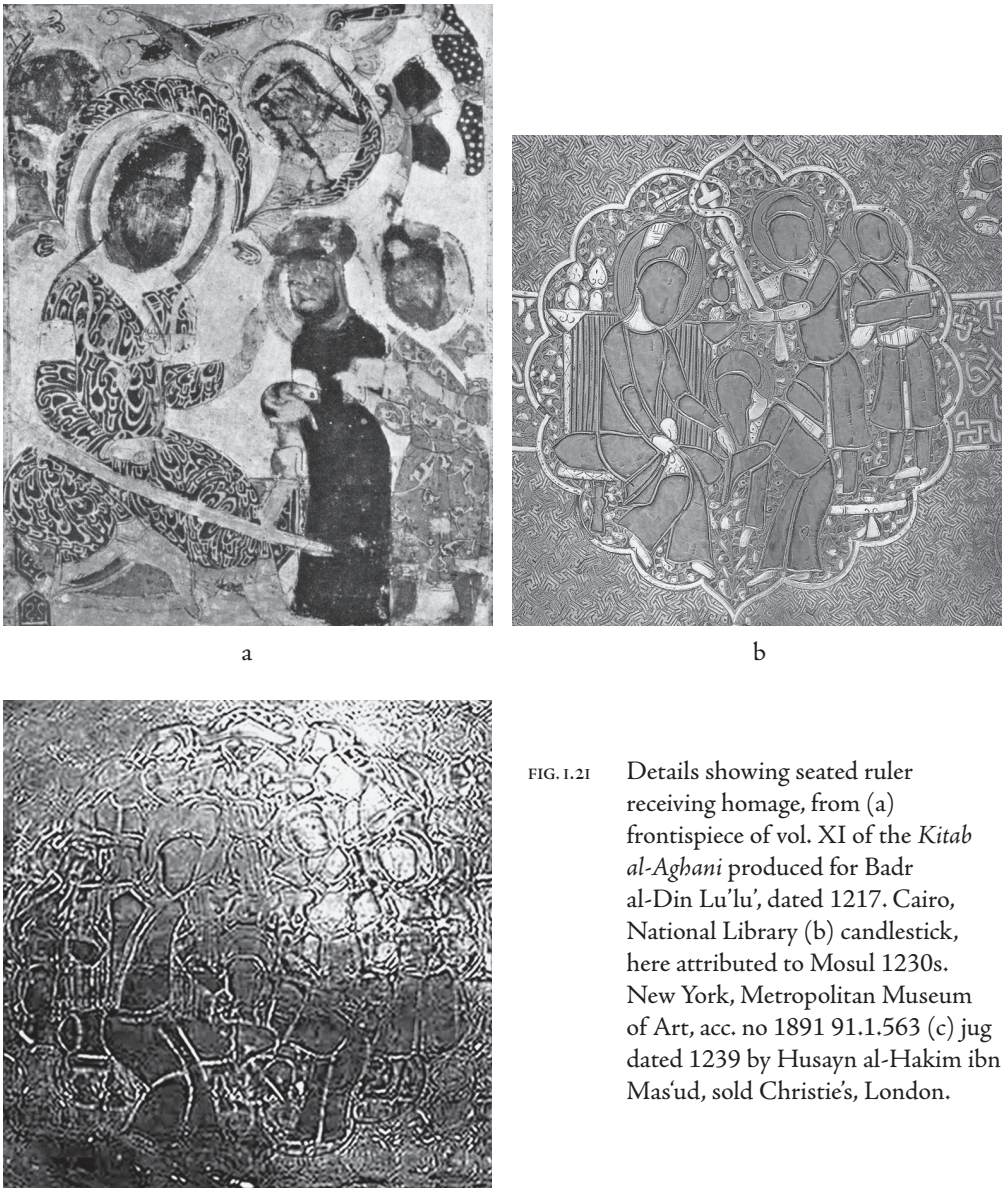
In addition, Christian miniature painting and objects from the Mosul area permit us to assign to Mosul the most studied of the silver-inlaid vessels, the canteen in the Freer Gallery of Art. The canteen is usually attributed to Syria, a claim which stems in part from Dimand's claim that its Crusader figures suggest it was made by a Christian who had emigrated from Mosul to Syria.[139] In fact, the figures of Crusader and Muslim knights on the reverse of the canteen relate to those on a candlestick we have already

a b

FIG. 1.20 (a) detail from candlestick, here attributed to Mosul 1230s. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no 1891 91.1.563 (b) detail from the frontispiece of vol. IV of the *Kitab al-Aghani* produced for Badr al-Din Lu'lu', c.1217. Cairo, National Library.

associated with Mosul, while the figurative imagery on the front has strong links not to Syria but to Jacobite Syriac imagery connected to monasteries in Mosul and what is now southeast Turkey.

On the front of the canteen three narrative scenes of the life of Christ encircle a roundel of the Virgin Hodegetria. The scene of the nativity is iconographically close to the version in two Syriac lectionaries,[140] one of which is datable to 1216–20, while



a b c

FIG. 1.21 Details showing seated ruler receiving homage, from (a) frontispiece of vol. XI of the *Kitab al-Aghani* produced for Badr al-Din Lu'lu', dated 1217. Cairo, National Library (b) candlestick, here attributed to Mosul 1230s. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no 1891 91.1.563 (c) jug dated 1239 by Husayn al-Hakim ibn Mas'ud, sold Christie's, London.

the other was produced in a year that has traditionally been read as the equivalent of 1219–20 but is more probably 1260.[141] Whether the earlier manuscript was produced near Mardin or in Mosul is still debated, but the second was definitely made in the monastery of Mar Mattai outside Mosul.[142]

Occupying the central boss on the front of the canteen is an image of the Virgin Hodegetria that can be connected with Mosul in two ways. First, this particular rendering of the Virgin was not especially common in Eastern Christian contexts, but was employed by the Syriac community in Mosul in the thirteenth century: examples

a

b

c

d

FIG. 1.22 Details from (a–b) candlestick, here attributed to Mosul 1230s. London, British Museum, acc. no OA 1969 9-22 1 (c–d) the frontispieces of, respectively, vol. XIX (image reversed) and vol. XVII of the *Kitab al-Aghani* produced for Badr al-Din Lu'lu', these volumes between 1217 and 1219.

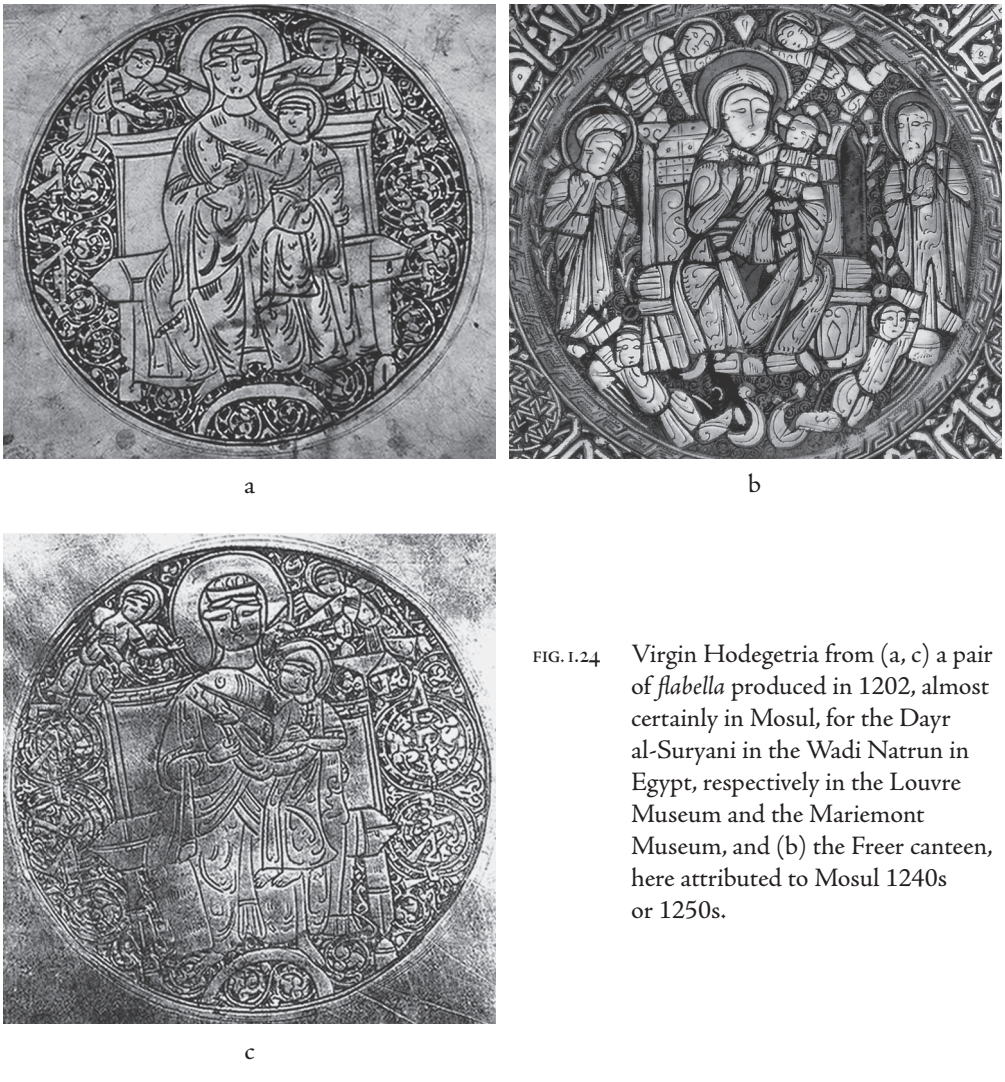
can be found in the two thirteenth-century lectionaries just referred to, as well as on a stone sculpture from the Church of the Virgin in Mosul. Second, close parallels occur on a pair of brass liturgical fans that can be linked to Mosul.

These brass *flabella* bear Syriac inscriptions indicating they were produced in Anno Graecorum 1514/1202 (Fig. 1.24). They were found in the Deir al-Suriani in the Wadi Natrun in Egypt, a monastery with a long history of relations with the Jacobite communities of the Jazira, and at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century with Mosul especially.[143] The *flabella* are engraved, and not

a

b

FIG. 1.23 Entry into Jerusalem (a) taken from the Freer canteen, here attributed to Mosul 1240s or 1250s (image flattened out and reversed) (b) composite image, right-hand section taken from British Library MS Or.3372, from Monastery of Qartmin early eleventh century, left section from Vatican MS.Syr.559, dated probably 1260 (see note 142).



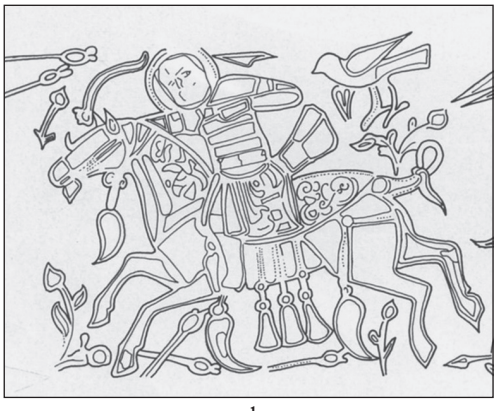
a b c

FIG. 1.24 Virgin Hodegetria from (a, c) a pair of *flabella* produced in 1202, almost certainly in Mosul, for the Dayr al-Suryani in the Wadi Natrun in Egypt, respectively in the Louvre Museum and the Mariemont Museum, and (b) the Freer canteen, here attributed to Mosul 1240s or 1250s.

inlaid with silver, but there is no evidence of such work in Egypt, and it seems most likely that they were produced in Mosul and sent as gifts, which would make them the earliest dated examples of Mosul metalwork, and important evidence of the contribution of Christian metalworkers to the tradition that developed over the next half century.[144]

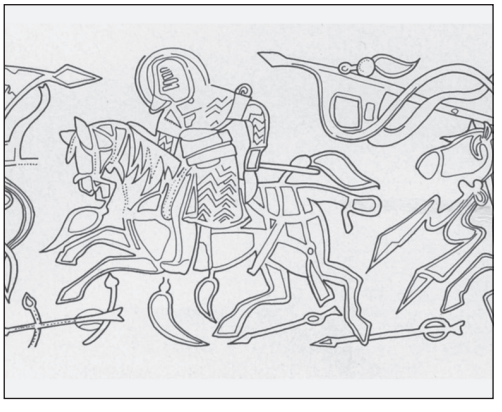
It would be hasty, though, to assume that the canteen was produced by an isolated Christian workshop. On the rear of the canteen there is a frieze showing a combat between Crusader and Muslim knights, and the figures are a simplified version of those found on a candlestick we earlier associated with Mosul – it bears the diagnostic octagon motif, and uses banal inscriptions similar to those on the ewer by Ibrahim

a



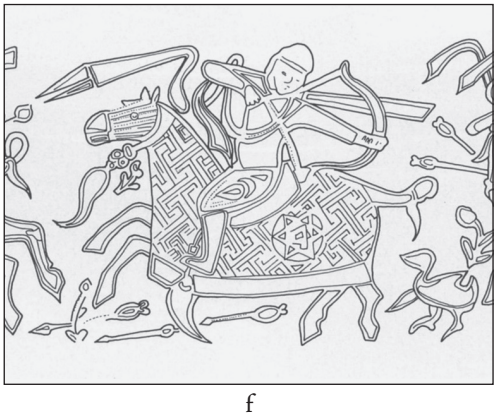
d

b



e

c



f

FIG. 1.25 Mounted knights in combat (a–c) from the 'Freer canteen', here attributed to Mosul, 1240s or 1250s (d–f) from a candlestick in the MIA, Doha, here attributed to Mosul, late 1220s or 1230s.

ibn Mawaliya.[145] The figures on the candlestick are considerably more detailed than those on the canteen; and the flying pennants are intelligible on the candlestick in a way that they are not on the canteen (Fig. 1.25). As the candlestick dates, I believe, to the late 1220s or early 1230s, and the canteen to a decade or more later, we can see the process of deformation over time. Yet the two objects seem ultimately to have shared a common model. The relationship between the candlestick and the canteen strengthens the attribution of the canteen to Mosul, and their dependence on a graphic model confirms what we have seen from the other few examples cited: that there was a phase of Mosul production in the second quarter of the thirteenth century that drew on a pictorial tradition for inspiration.[146]

* * *

This paper has focused on metalwork attributable to Mosul in the period between about 1225 and 1250, and it has touched upon the emigration of one family from Mosul to Damascus and Cairo between about 1250 and 1275. Both topics – efflorescence and emigration – are often ascribed to the impact of the Mongol invasions, in driving Iranian craftsmen to settle in the Jazira, and then in driving metalworkers from the Jazira to the Mamluk realm. The topic of diaspora raises the question of whether Mosul was an exclusive centre of silver-inlay production in the Arab-speaking world in the first half of the thirteenth century, and, while I have attempted here to stress its importance, I would like in this last section to comment briefly on, first, the production of silver-inlaid brass objects in Arab cities other than Mosul, and, second, the purported impact of the Mongols on the genesis and decline of metalworking in Mosul. I would like to conclude by considering what the evidence assembled here has revealed about 'the Mosul School' of metalwork.

The origins of inlaid metalworking in Mosul are still vague, and require further research. Objects signed by metalworkers who dubbed themselves al-Mawsili span almost exactly a century – from 1220 to 1323 (Table 1.1). Mosul, though, was a metal centre long before that: al-Muqaddasi in the late tenth century noted that it exported iron and finished goods such as buckets, knives and chains, and Ibn al-Azraq mentions how in 544/1149–50 he sold iron in Mosul on behalf of the ruler of Mayyafariqin.[147] Yet no object is known bearing the name of a Mosul metalworker before the thirteenth century. Something changed, and that surely was the development of inlaying silver into beaten 'brass'.

The production of inlaid brasses and bronzes eventually ranged from Egypt to the Punjab, and James Allan has brilliantly demonstrated how the technique was developed in the twelfth century by silversmiths in Khurasan who were faced with a growing

shortage of silver.[148] By the middle of that century metalworkers in Herat achieved a high level of virtuosity, and from Khurasan the technique spread westwards. The craft required relatively few tools, and *émigré* artisans could have taken their skills to several centres in western Iran, Iraq and the Jazira.

The picture that emerges from Table 1.1 points, however, to few production centres in the first half of the century. The picture may be partial, as we have to rely on a handful of objects whose place of manufacture is clearly stated, and on the less certain evidence of the maker's *nisbah*s. Nonetheless, the available evidence is overwhelming. The Mawsili *nisbah* was the pre-eminent appellation for metalworkers working in Iraq, the Jazira, Syria and Egypt throughout the thirteenth century. Only two other geographical *nisbah*s are known in connection with makers of silver-inlaid vessels – al-Is'irdi, relating to Siirt, and al-Baghdadi (Table 1.1). In both cases, however, we can identify a stylistic connection with Mosul, including the use of the octagon (Fig. 1.9).[149] From the thirteenth-century Arab-speaking world no maker of silver-inlaid vessels is known who has a *nisbah* connected with any city in Egypt or Syria, not even Cairo, Damascus or Aleppo. There is, however, an exception – makers of scientific instruments in Syria. The available evidence suggests they were the pioneers of silver inlay in Syria (Table 1.1).[150]

The earliest instrument known to have been inlaid with silver in Syria was produced in 619/1222–23, more than three decades before the earliest dated inlaid vessels indubitably produced there – those by Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Mawsili from the 1250s. There was not necessarily a clear dividing line between the production of scientific instruments and objects of a domestic type, as is made clear by Muhammad ibn Khutlukh, who made an elaborate geomantic table and an inlaid incense-burner. On both objects he signs himself 'al-Mawsili'. The geomantic table he made in 639/1241–42, though it is not known where, and the incense-burner in Damascus, though it is not known when.[151] It remains uncertain, therefore, when he settled in Damascus, but it is possible he preceded Husayn ibn Muhammad in Damascus by a decade or more. In short, scientific instruments warn us against oversimplifying the history of silver inlay in the Middle East.[152] Having underestimated Mosul for so long, we should not now make the error of overestimating it. Nothing, however, can gainsay that the earliest inlaid vessels documented as made in Syria all have a Mawsili connection.

In Mosul itself the technique seems to have been established by the turn of the thirteenth century at the very latest. The Louvre ewer by Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya is tentative in design and execution, and Rice dated it to around 1200, given that Ibrahim's pupil Ismail ibn Ward produced an accomplished object in 615/1220. The two *flabella* of 1202 are not inlaid with silver, but they evince an assured figural style and a background of 'cogged' wheels and leafy scrolls that is a feature of much Mosul work in the first half of the thirteenth century, including the Blacas ewer, indicating that this tradition

may well date from the closing decades of the twelfth century (Fig. 1.24).[153] It is not, though, until the 1220s that we have several signed and dated items, which probably reflects the craft's growing status and production. The next fifteen to twenty years saw rapid innovations in technique, decoration and composition, and metalworkers drawing inspiration from contemporary miniature painting of the Mosul area.

Comparing three ewers produced in Mosul over the space of some thirty years – Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya's, Ibn al-Dhaki's (1223) and Shuja' ibn Man'a's (1232) – we can see that stylistic and technical changes were rapid in the first decades of the century. The difference between those of 1223 and 1232 is considerable, whereas the contrast between the decorative style of Shuja''s Blacas ewer (1232) and al-Dhaki's Louvre basin (1238–40) seems comparatively insignificant (Fig. 1.4).

By the 1250s, in the vexed last years of the reign of Badr al-Din Lu'lu', and as the members of what I take to be the second generation of silver-inlay craftsmen may have been drawing to an end of their working lives, we have the first certain evidence of a metalworker from Mosul – a man who might have been the son of Muhammad ibn Fattuh – operating elsewhere, in this case Damascus. Others, such as Muhammad ibn Khutlukh, may have emigrated earlier, but there is no current proof.

This chronology raises questions over several common assumptions about the impact the Mongols had on metalworking in Mosul: that it was pressure from the Mongols in the early thirteenth century which forced craftsmen in Herat and its environs to move westwards and to establish an inlay tradition in Mosul;[154] that their attacks and exactions in the Jazira in the middle of the century drove Mosul craftsmen to flee to Syria and Egypt;[155] and that the Mongol sack of Mosul brought on the demise of the industry there.

First, the tradition in Mosul began earlier than most have assumed, and its origins were more complex than the arrival of metalworkers from Iran.[156] Second, with the exception of Muhammad ibn Khutlukh and 'Ali ibn Kasirat, the only metalworkers known to have emigrated from Mosul belonged to a family whose earliest recorded practitioner – Muhammad ibn Fattuh – was a hireling not the owner of a workshop. His skills did not compare well to most of his contemporaries, and it may, therefore, have been an issue of aptitude and economic standing rather than Mongol pressure that persuaded his family to seek its fortune elsewhere, though I concede this is a highly speculative suggestion.

As for the end of the tradition, instability following the death of Badr al-Din Lu'lu' in July 1259, and the Mongol siege and occupation of Mosul in July 1262 must have caused local upheaval. Indeed, the dearth of documented metalwork that can be associated with the Jazira in the second half of the thirteenth century contrasts with the profusion of Mamluk and Rasulid material from Damascus and Cairo. This surely indicates a shift in the centres of production, but we should not assume that

production ceased in Mosul, because there may also have been a shift in the process of commissioning.

A considerable amount of inlaid metalwork, much of it related to the work of 'Ali ibn 'Abdallah al-'Alawi al-Mawsili, can be stylistically attributed to the second half of the century, and none of the inscriptions connects the objects to the Mamluks. Some, like the wallet in the Courtauld Gallery of Art, bear distinctly Ilkhanid iconography, while it has been proposed that the candlestick in the Benaki Museum dated 717/1317–18 and signed by 'Ali ibn 'Umar ibn Ibrahim al-Sankari al-Mawsili may have been made for an Artuqid ruler of Mardin.[157] Such work was not Mamluk, and may well have been produced in Mosul, from where it fed, in a process that has yet to be fully defined, into the west Iranian and Fars tradition of metal inlay in the fourteenth century.[158] One factor may have been the Mongol practice of corralling artisans, and we read that in 1283 one of their advisors, Shams al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman, the Greek who has the dubious fame of having killed the last Caliph of Baghdad, al-Musta'sim, collected craftsmen in Tabriz, including jewellers, and 'made everything to a royal pattern'.[159] This was the centralised production of an empire, very different from a model of small workshops working for the open market and a plethora of petty princes.

In short, the silver-inlaid brass industry in Mosul was not a straightforward import from Iran occasioned by the invasions of the Mongols. Iranian artisans seem to have played a role,[160] but from the 1220s and 1230s production in Mosul had an internal dynamic, following a model of innovation in which, after a period of experimentation, an early group of innovators establish in a burst of creativity the standards and techniques that provide the basis for successive generations.

Three factors – the longevity of this tradition, spanning a hundred and twenty years or more; the rapidity of stylistic change, at least in the opening decades; and the diversity of craftsmen, at least in the first half of the century, when 19 items were produced by at least eight craftsmen – ensured a variety in production that prompted Richard Ettinghausen to lament 'how difficult it is to make attributions of metal objects from this period'.[161] Looking at minor details has, however, helped us identify from the first half of century a core group of artists whose work was interrelated. This was a period that witnessed a fecundity of ideas and imagery, in the context of a cultural efflorescence that embraced Sunnis, Shi'is and Christians in the Mosul region in the first half of the thirteenth century, and in a period of material prosperity for Mosul under Badr al-Din Lu'lu', lauded, if the reading of an inscription is correct, as the 'killer of barrenness'.[162]

Even if some Mawsili metalworkers eventually moved away from the city, they seem to have formed, in the 1220s and 1230s, a close-knit group. This closeness manifests itself in several ways. First, there was a kinship in their products, in terms of shapes,

imagery, motifs and skills. In the case of the relief rosette, that skill was practiced even though it would be rarely seen.

Second, while the high number of signatures reflects personal pride, the phrasing attests to a sense of community, to a pride in the transmission of skills and professional relationships. Whether or not the octagon was a guild or workshop motif, what is certain is that these metalworkers declared their association in unparalleled fashion, for this is the only body of metalwork from any period in the Muslim world on which we find reference to the craft relationships between master and pupil, apprentice, perhaps slave, and hireling – *tilmidh*, *ghulam*, and *ajir*.[163] This was different from a master craftsman expressing pride in his own work by prefacing his signature with the word *mu'allim*.[164] This was the pride of a pupil or apprentice at being attached to a master.[165]

Something similar occurs in Ottoman calligraphy, where calligraphers often indicate their *isnad*, usually following the issuance of an *ijaza*, or certificate of competency, by the master calligrapher. We have no such evidence for the metalworkers of Mosul, but two items may provide physical proof of a system of workshop training. One is the box by Isma'il ibn Ward, on which he declares himself to be the *tilmidh* of Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya. The complexity of decoration and fineness of execution seem to defy its

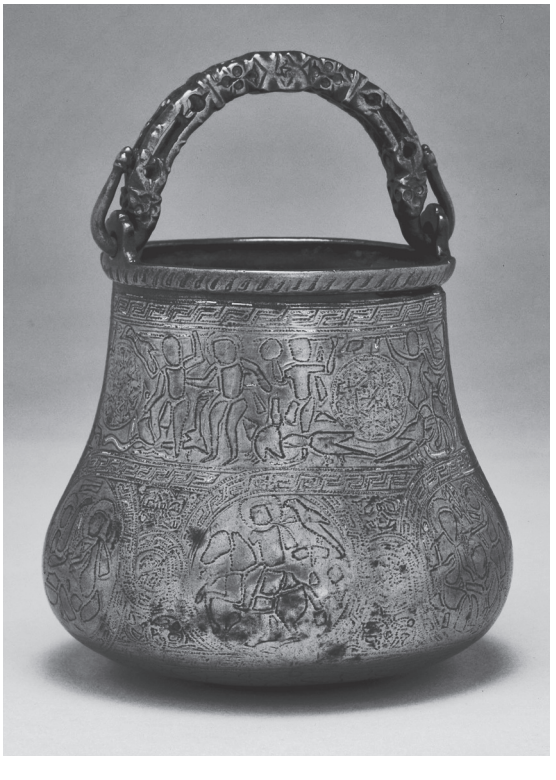


FIG. 1.26 Diminutive bucket, here attributed to Mosul c.1225–35, British Museum, inv. no 1948 5-83. Height 8.3cm. Photograph courtesy of the British Museum.

diminutive size (6.3 by 3.6cm), and perhaps that is the very point. Was it an apprentice's or a journeyman's *tour-de-force* on his quest to move into the guild of craftsmen?

The box was arguably large enough to have been of functional use, but that is hardly the case with a miniature bucket in the British Museum (8.3cm) (Fig. 1.26) which seems more like a *jeu d'esprit* – a known category of functional object but in a size so small as to render it useless, yet decorated in elaborate fashion, including a scene of an enthroned ruler whose hand is being kissed by an obeisant subject, and a complex anthropomorphic inscription.[166] If these two items were the credential work of an apprentice or journeyman, it would be physical proof of a guild system that was ubiquitous in the Muslim world at the time but rarely expressed in epigraphic terms as it is on Mosul metalwork.

Craftsmen's names reveal that the community of metalworkers was much more inclusive than a few family networks, and that some of them were from Muslim families of long standing, while others were recent converts, and others Christian.[167] Pride in the larger community of metalworkers and pride in their city were embodied in the *nisbah* 'al-Mawsili'. Practitioners continued to use it for over a century with a dedication that can only be paralleled by the potters of Kashan; and its aura – its 'brand value' – was evident when it was used by Husayn ibn Ahmad ibn Husayn in Cairo in the 1290s, as he seems to have been from a family that had not lived in Mosul for one or even two generations.[168]

Over the course of more than a century, Mawsili metalworkers displayed a conscious sense of community and tradition, and, at least in the early years, a proud acknowledgement of transmission. Their products gained fame, were disseminated, and eventually emulated in other centres. All of these are vital elements in the definition of an artistic school – in this case what we are justified in calling the Mosul School of metalwork.

Date	Method of dating	Object	Artist	Geographical *nisbah*	Made in	Dedicatee	Ruler of	Collection	Ref.
576/1180 Nov–Dec	dated	ka'ba key				al-Nasir li-Din Allah	Abbasid Caliph	Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, inv. no 2/2210	1
1182–1231	reign date	basin				al-Malik al-Amjad Bahram Shah	Ba'lbakk	Cairo MIA; ex-Harari collection no 15	2
1200–25	approx.	ewer	Ibrahim b. Mawaliya	*al-Mawsili*	*Mosul*			Paris, Louvre, inv. no K3435	3
1201–39	reign date	candlestick				Artuq Arslan ibn Il-Ghazi	Mardin and Mayyafariqin	Jerusalem, Haram al-Sharif Museum	4
1208–51	reign date	basin				Abu'l Qasim Mahmud ibn Sanjarshah ibn Ghazi	atabek of Jazirat ibn 'Umar	Berlin MIK, inv. no I.3570; ex-Sarre collection	5
1208–51	reign date	door				Abu'l Qasim Mahmud ibn Sanjarshah [ibn Ghazi]	atabek of Jazira ibn 'Umar	Istanbul, Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi, inv. no 4282	6
1218–38	reign date	dish				al-Malik al-Kamil I Nasir al-Din Muhammad	Egypt/Damascus	ex-Albert Goupil, Paris	7
1218–38	reign date	ewer				al-Malik al-Kamil I Nasir al-Din Muhammad	Egypt/Damascus	Istanbul, Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi	8
615/**1218**	dated	pen-box				al-Malik al-Adil Abu Bakr	Egypt, Damascus, Aleppo	Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no 13174	9
617/**1220**	dated	box	Isma'il b. Ward	al-Mawsili	*Mosul*			Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no 13171	10
618/**1221**	dated	astrolabe	Muhammad b. Abi Bakr	al-Isfahani				Oxford, Museum of the History of Science; ex-Lewis Evans Collection	11
619/**1222**	dated	astrolabe	Siraj (inlay)	al-Dimishqi		al-Malik al-Mu'azzam 'Isa	Damascus	Istanbul, Deniz Müzesi	12
1220–30	approx.	ewer				Abu'l Qasim Mahmud ibn Sanjarshah	atabek of Jazira ibn 'Umar	Doha, MIA; ex-Nuhad es-Said collection	13
1220–47	reign date	tray				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shihab al-Din Ghazi	Mayyafariqin	Cairo MIA; ex-Harari Collection, no 356	14
620/**1223**	dated	ewer	Ahmad b. 'Umar, known as al-Dhaki	al-Mawsili				Cleveland Museum of Art, inv. no 1956.11; ex-Stora collection	15
1225–50	approx.	bowl			*Mosul*	Najm al-Din 'Umar al-Badri		Bologna, Museo Civico Medievale, inv. no 2128	16
622/**1225**	dated	candlestick	Abu Bakr b. al-Hajji Jaldak	al-Mawsili				Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, acc. no 57.148; ex-Stora collection	17
1225–50	approx.	candlestick			*Mosul*	Almir Sayf ibn ibn [sic] sahib al-Mawsil		Paris, Louvre, inv. no 7431; ex-Delort de Gléon	18

TABLE I.1a 1200–75: Near Eastern inlaid metalwork with documentary inscriptions, including known makers and dedicatees. Bold type indicates a precisely recorded date or provenance. Italics indicate a strong presumption.

Date	Method of dating	Object	Artist	Geographical *nisbah*	Made in	Dedicatee	Ruler of	Collection	Ref.
1225–50	approx.	candlestick	Hajj Isma'il and Muhammad b. Fattuh	al-Mawsili	*Mosul*			Cairo, MIA inv. no 15121; ex-Harari collection no 174	19
1225–50	approx.	casket	Muhammad	al-Baghdadi				Location unknown; ex-Edward Falkener collection	20
1225–50	approx.	candlestick			*Mosul*	al-sayyid 'Abd al-Qadir b. al-sayyid 'Umar al-Qufa'i (?)		London Art Market 2011	21
1225–50	approx.	jug				Isma`il b. Ahmad al-Wasiti		location unknown	22
1225–50	approx.	incense-burner	Sinni-i Razi					New York, Pierpoint Morgan collection	23
622/**1225**	dated	globe	Qaysar b. Abi'l Qasim b. Musafir			al-Malik al-Kamil I Nasir al-Din Muhammad	Egypt/Damascus	Italy, Naples, Museo Nazionale, Capodimonte inv. no 1137; ex-Borgia Collection	24
623/**1226**	dated	ewer	'Umar ibn Hajji Jaldak	al-Mawsili				New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no 91 1 586	25
625/**1227**	dated	astrolabe	'Abd al-Karim	al-Misri		al-Malik al-Ashraf Muzaffar al-Din Musa	Diyarbakir and later Damascus	Oxford, Museum of the History of Science, CCA 103; ex-Lewis Evans Collection	26
627/**1229**	dated	ewer	Iyas, *ghulam* of 'Abd al-Karim b. al-Turabi	al-Mawsili				Istanbul, Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi	27
1231–33	regnal titles	box				al-Malik al-Aziz Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad	Aleppo	Italy, Naples, Museo Nazionale, Capodimonte, inv. no 112095; ex-Borgia Collection	28
629/**1232**	dated	ewer	Qasim b. 'Ali	al-Mawsili		Shihab al-Din Tughril al-'Azizi	atabek of al-Malik al-'Aziz	Washington DC, Freer Gallery of Art, acc. no F1955.22	29
629/**1232**	dated	ewer	Shuja' b. Man'a	al-Mawsili	**Mosul**			London, British Museum, inv. no 1866 12–69 61; ex-Duc de Blacas collection	30
1233–59	reign date	box			*Mosul*	Badr al-Din Lu'lu' al-Malik al-Rahim	Mosul	London, British Museum, inv. no 1878 12-30 678; ex-Henderson collection	31
1233–59	reign date	candlestick			*Mosul*	Badr al-Din Lu'lu' al-Malik al-Rahim	Mosul	St. Petersburg, Hermitage	32
1236–60	reign date	basin				al-Malik al-Nasir II Salah al-Din Yusuf	Aleppo and later Damascus	Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts	33
1236–60	reign date	vase				al-Malik al-Nasir II Salah al-Din Yusuf	Aleppo and later Damascus	Paris, Louvre, inv. no OA 4090; ex-Barberini collection	34
634/**1237**	dated	pen-box	Abu'l Qasim b. Sa'd b. Muhammad	al-Is'irdi		Jamal al-Din Ahmad ibn Ghazi		Cairo MIA, ex-Harari collection, no 226	35
636/1238–1240	reign date	basin	Ahmad b. 'Umar, known as al-Dhaki			al-Malik al-'Adil II Sayf al-Din Abu Bakr	Egypt/Damascus	Parls, Louvre, inv. no 5991	36
636/1238–1240	reign date	box				al-Malik al-'Adil II Sayf al-Din Abu Bakr	Egypt/Damascus	London, Victoria and Albert Museum, acc. no 8508–1863	37
636/1238–40	reign date	incense-burner				al-Malik al-'Adil II Sayf al-Din Abu Bakr	Egypt/Damascus	Keir Collection, on loan to Berlin MIK	38

TABLE I.Ia (cont.)

Date	Method of dating	Object	Artist	Geographical *nisbah*	Made in	Dedicatee	Ruler of	Collection	Ref.
637/**1239**–40	dated	jug	Husayn al-Hakim ibn Mas'ud	al-Mawsili		Yusuf al-Kinabari (?)		Location unknown	39
1239–49	reign date	basin				al-Malik al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub	Egypt/Damascus	Cairo MIA, inv. no 15043; ex-Harari collection no 37	40
1239–49	reign date	bowl				al-Malik al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub	Egypt/Damascus	University of Michigan, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, inv. no 28801x; ex-Sobernheim collection	41
638/**1240**	dated	astrolabe	'Abd al-Karim	al-Misri?		al-Malik al-Ashraf Musa	Diyarbakir and later Damascus	London, British Museum, inv. no 1855.7–9 1	42
1240–65	approx.	bowl				Jamal al-Din Musa ibn Yaghmur		Cairo MIA; ex-Harari collection no 125	43
1240	approx.	candlestick	Abu'l Qasim b. Sa'd b. Muhammad	al-Is'irdi				Sweden, ex-Lamm Collection	44
1240–49	reign date	tray				al-Malik al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub	Egypt/Damascus	Paris, Louvre, inv. no MAO360	45
639/**1241**	dated	geomantic table	Muhammad b. Khutlukh	al-Mawsili	*Damascus*	Muhammad al-Muhtasib al-Najjari		London, British Museum, acc. no 1888 5-26 1	46
1225–50	approx.	incense-burner	Muhammad b. Khutlukh	al-Mawsili	**Damascus**			Doha, MIA; ex-Aron collection	47
1225–50	approx.	pen-box	'Umar	al-Is'irdi				Moscow, State Museum of Oriental Art, inv. no 1590	48
640/**1242**	dated	ewer	Ahmad b. 'Umar, known as al-Dhaki	al-Mawsili				Keir Collection, on loan to Berlin MIK; ex-Homberg collection	49
641/**1243**	dated	incense-burner						London, British Museum, acc. no 1878 12-30 678; ex-Henderson collection	50
643/**1245**	dated	pen-box	Abu'l Qasim b. Sa'd b. Muhammad	al-Is'irdi				Paris, Louvre, inv. no K3438	51
c.1245	approx.	pen-box	Abu'l Qasim b. Sa'd b. Muhammad	al-Is'irdi				Location unknown	52
c.1245–59	titles	basin	…Yusuf		*Mosul*	Badr al-Din Lu'lu' al-Malik al-Rahim	Mosul	Kiev, Museum of the Academy of Sciences	53
c.1245–59	titles	tray			*Mosul*	Badr al-Din Lu'lu' al-Malik al-Rahim	Mosul	London, Victoria & Albert Museum, acc. no 905-1907	54
c.1245–59	titles	tray			*Mosul*	Badr al-Din Lu'lu' al-Malik al-Rahim	Mosul	Munich, Staatliches Museum für Volkerkunde no 26–N–118	55
644/**1246**–47	dated	ewer	Yunus b. Yusuf	al-Mawsili				Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum, inv. no 54.456	56
1247–49	titles	basin				al-Malik al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub	Egypt/Damascus	Washington DC, Freer Gallery of Art, inv. no F1955.10; ex-Duc d'Arenberg collection	57
646/**1248**	dated	candlestick	Dawud b. Salama	al-Mawsili				Paris, Louvre, inv. no MAD 4414; ex-Goupil Collection	58

TABLE I.Ia (cont.)

Date	Method of dating	Object	Artist	Geographical *nisbah*	Made in	Dedicatee	Ruler of	Collection	Ref.
646/**1248**	dated	door	ʻUmar b. al-Khidr al-Maliki	al-Badri	*Mosul*			Mosul, Mausoleum of `Awn al-Din	59
1250–64	reign date	tray				al-Malik al-Mughith `Umar	Karak	Cairo MIA inv. no 8870	60
1250–95	reign date	bowl				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	Harari Collection	61
1250–95	reign date	basin				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no 13075	62
1250–95	reign date	basin				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	Cairo MIA; ex-Harari Collection, no 321	63
1250–95	reign date	brazier				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no 91.1.540	64
1250–95	reign date	candlestick				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	Lyons, Musée des Beaux-Arts, inv. no d.569	65
1250–95	reign date	basin				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	Cairo MIA no 10839; ex-Paravicini Collection	66
1250–95	reign date	tray				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	Paris, Collection Marquet de Vasselot	67
1250–95	reign date	tray				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	Paris, Louvre; ex-Sivadjian Collection	68
1250–95	reign date	tray				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	Cairo MIA, inv. no 3155	69
1250–95	reign date	tray				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	Paris, ex-Homberg Collection	70
1250–95	reign date	tray				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	Cairo MIA, inv. no 4022	71
1250–95	reign date	tray				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	Cairo MIA, inv. no 15153; ex-Harari Collection no 12	72
1250–95	reign date	tray				al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no 91.1.603	73
c.1250	approx.	vase				Abu Bakr ibn Ibrahim ibn Isma‘il		Paris, Louvre	74
650/**1252**	dated	basin	Dawud b. Salama	al-Mawsili		Badr al-Din Baysari al-jamali al-Muhammadi (graffito)		Paris, Louvre, ex-Musée des Arts Décoratifs; ex-Albert Goupil	75
653/**1255**	dated	pen-box	ʻAli b. Yahya	al-Mawsili	**Mosul**			Copenhagen, David Collection, inv.no 6/1997	76
654/**1256**	dated	casket	Rumantiq (?) al-Sha’m					ex-Peytel Collection	77

TABLE I.1a (cont.)

Date	Method of dating	Object	Artist	Geographical *nisbah*	Made in	Dedicatee	Ruler of	Collection	Ref.
655/**1257**	dated	candlestick	Husayn b. Muhammad	al-Mawsili	**Damascus**	Abu Durr Badr		Doha MIA; ex-Homayzi Collection	78
657/**1259**	dated	ewer	Husayn b. Muhammad	al-Mawsili	**Damascus**	al-Malik al-Nasir II Salah al-Din Yusuf		Paris, Louvre, inv. no OA 7428; ex-Delort de Gléon	79
657/**1259**	dated	vase	ʻAli b. Hammud	al-Mawsili		Haqta or Qusta b. Tudhra		Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, inv.no 360	80
c.1260–70		basin				(Anon. officer of) al-Muzaffari al-Mansuri		Doha MIA; ex-Homayzi Collection	81
1261–93	reign date	basin				Qara Arslan b. Il-Ghazi		London, Sotheby's, April 2012, lot 538	82
668/**1269**	dated	candlestick	Muhammad b. Hasan	al-Mawsili	**Cairo**			Cairo MIA, inv. no 1657	83
669/**1270**	dated	astrolabe	Ibrahim	al-Dimishqi				London, British Museum, inv. no 90 3–15 3	84
673/**1274**	dated	ewer	ʻAli b. Hammud	al-Mawsili		Emir Atmish Saʻdi		Tehran, Iran-Bastan Museum	85
1274	by association	basin	ʻAli b. Hammud	al-Mawsili				Tehran, Iran-Bastan Museum	86

TABLE I.Ia (cont.)

Date	Method of dating	Object	Artist	Geographical *nisbah*	Made in	Dedicatee	Ruler of	Collection	Ref.
1275–1300	date range	basin				ʻIzz al-Din Aydamur Jamdar Qaimari	Viceroy of Syria in 1270, died Nov 1300	Cairo MIA; ex-Harari Collection no 7	87
1275–1300	date range	basin				Rukn al-Din Baibars alʻAdili	as *amir*	Cairo MIA, no 8241	88
1275–1300	approx.	ewer	ʻAli b. ʻAbdallah	al-Mawsili				Berlin MIK, inv. no I.6580	89
1275–1300	approx.	basin	ʻAli b. ʻAbdallah	al-Mawsili				Berlin MIK, inv. no I.6581	90
674/**1275**	dated	ewer	ʻAli b. Husayn b. Muhammad	al-Mawsili	**Cairo**	al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	Paris, Louvre, inv. no UCAD 4412; ex-Goupil Collection	91
674/**1275**	dated	globe (celestial)	Muhammad b. Hilal al-Munajjim	al-Mawsili				London, British Museum, acc. no 71 3–1 1.a,b	92
1277–79	titles	handwarmer				Badr al-Din Baysari		London, British Museum, acc. no 78 12–30 682; ex-Fould collection	93
676/**1277**	title	tray				Sayf ad-Din Qulunjaq al-maliki al-Zahiri al-Saʻidi		Paris, Musée Jacquemart-André	94
1277	date of death	hanging lamp			*Damascus*	Tomb of al-Zahir Rukn al-Din Baybars in Damascus	Egypt and Syria	Doha MIA; ex-Nathaniel Rothschild collection (?)	95
1277	date of death	hanging lamp			*Damascus*	Tomb of al-Zahir Rukn al-Din Baybars in Damascus	Egypt and Syria	Location unknown; ex-Schefer Collection; ex-Edmond de Rothschild Collection	96
1281–82	date of rule	tray and stand				Baha al-Din Qaraqush al-Aydamuri al-Nasiri	Governor of Qus and Akhmin in 680	Cairo MIA	97
680/**1281**	dated	pen-box	Mahmud b. Sunqur					London, British Museum, acc. no 91 6–23 5	98
681/**1282**	dated	candlestick	ʻAli b. Husayn b. Muhammad	al-Mawsili	**Cairo**	eunuch Imad al-Din Wasif al-Khalifati		Cairo MIA, inv. no 15127; ex-Harari Collection, no 39	99
684/**1285**	dated	basin	ʻAli b. Husayn b. Muhammad	al-Mawsili	*Cairo*			Paris, Louvre; ex-Piet-Lataudri+P80e Collection	100
686/**1287**	dated	candlestick	ʻAli b. Abi Bakr					Eyrichshof, Baron Rotenhan	101
1290–93	titles	candlestick			*Damascus*	Zayn al-Din Katbugha	while an officer of al-Ashraf Khalil	Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, inv. no 54.459 (body); Cairo MIA inv. no 4463 (neck)	102
1290–93	reign date	candlestick fragment				al-Ashraf Khalil	Egypt and Syria	Cairo Art Market	103
c.1284–95	titles	bowl			*Damascus*	Sunqur al-Asʻar	when he was an amir in Damascus (?)	Athens, Benaki Museum	104
690/**1291**	dated	astrolabe	al-Ashraf ʻUmar b. Yusuf al-Muzaffari		**Yemen**	al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I	Yemen	New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no 91.1.535	105

TABLE I.Ib 1275–1325: a selection of Near Eastern inlaid metalwork with documentary inscriptions, including all known makers and some dedicatees. Bold type indicates a precisely recorded date or provenance. Italics indicate a strong presumption.

Date	Method of dating	Object	Artist	Geographical *nisbah*	Made in	Dedicatee	Ruler of	Collection	Ref.
694/1292-1311	titles	basin				Sayf al-Din Asandamur Silahdar		Cairo MIA; ex-Harari Collection no 120	106
695/**1295**	dated	astrolabe	ʻAbd al-Rahman b. Yusuf		**Damascus**			London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no 504–1888	107
1296–1321	reign date	candlestick				al-Malik al-Muʼayyad Hizabr al-Din Dawud b. Yusuf	Yemen	Formerly Kraft Collection	108
1296–1321	reign date	candlestick				al-Malik al-Muʼayyad Hizabr al-Din Dawud b. Yusuf	Yemen	Cairo MIA; ex-Harari Collection, no 54	109
697/**1296**	dated	candlestick	ʻAli b. Kasirat	al-Mawsili	**Damascus**	al-Malik al-Mansur Lajin		Cairo MIA, no 128	110
1298	date of death	candlestick			*Damascus*	Amir Sunqur Takriti		Cairo MIA, inv. no 7949	111
698/**1298**	dated	astrolabe	Al-Sahl al-Asturlabi	al-Naisaburi		al-Malik al-Muzaffar Mahmud	Hama (?)	Nuremberg, Germanisches Museum, inv. no WI 20	112
1296–1322	reign date	tray				al-Malik al-Muʼayyad Hizabr al-Din Dawud b. Yusuf	Yemen	New York, MMA, inv. no 91.1.605; ex-Edward C. Moore Collection	113
1296–1322	reign date	tray	Husayn b. Ahmad b. Husayn	al-Mawsili	**Cairo**	al-Malik al-Muʼayyad Hizabr al-Din Dawud b. Yusuf	Yemen	New York, MMA, acc. no 91.1.602; ex-Edward C. Moore Collection	114
702/**1302**	dated	pen-box				al-Malik al-Muʼayyad Hizabr al-Din Dawud b. Yusuf	Yemen	London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no 370–1897	115
704/**1304**	dated	pen-box						Paris, Louvre, inv. no 3621	116
708/**1308**	dated	candlestick						Boston MFA, inv. no 55.106	117
709/**1309**	dated	ewer	al-Hajj Muhammad ibn alʻAmili					Paris, Louvre, inv. no OA 7427; ex-Delort de Gléon Collection	118
717/**1317**	dated	candlestick	ʻAli b. ʻUmar b. Ibrahim al-Sankari	al-Mawsili				Athens, Benaki Museum, inv.no 13038	119
718/**1318**	dated	globe (celestial)	ʻAbd al-Rahman b. Burhan	al-Mawsili				Oxford, Museum of the History of Science, no 57-84/181;ex-Chadenat Collection; ex-Billmeir Collection	120
723/**1323**	dated	Qurʼan box	Ahmad b. Bara	al-Mawsili		Nasir al-Din Muhammad	Egypt and Syria	Cairo, Library of al-Azhar Mosque	121

TABLE I.Ib (cont.)

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a)

Date	Object	Artist	Geographical *nisbah*	Made where	Octagon/moon	Dedicatee	Collection
1200–25	ewer	Ibrahim b. Mawāliyā	al-Mawsili				Louvre
1220	box	Isma'il b. Ward	al-Mawsili				Benaki
1232	ewer	Qasim b. 'Ali	al-Mawsili			Shahib al-Din Tughril al-Azizi	Freer Gallery
1232	ewer	Shuja' b. Man'a	al-Mawsili	Mosul	octagon and moon		British Museum
1225–50	candlestick	Hajj Isma'il and Muhammad b. Fattuh	al-Mawsili		moon		Cairo MIA
1255	pen-box	'Ali b, Yahya	al-Mawsili	Mosul			David Collection
1233–59	basin					Badr al-Din Lu'Lu' al-Malik al-Rahim	Kiev
1233–59	box					Badr al-Din Lu'Lu' al-Malik al-Rahim	British Museum
1233–59	candlestick				moon	Badr al-Din Lu'Lu' al-Malik al-Rahim	Hermitage
1245	tray				octagon and moon	Badr al-Din Lu'Lu' al-Malik al-Rahim	Munich
1245	tray					Badr al-Din Lu'Lu' al-Malik al-Rahim	V&A
1248	door	'Umar b. al-Khidr al-Maliki	al-Badri				Mosul
1225–50	bowl					Najm al-Din 'Umar al-Badri	Bologna
1225–50	candlestick					son of the Lord of Mosul	Louvre

b)

1223	ewer	Ahmad b. 'Umar, known as al-Dhaki	al-Mawsili				Cleveland
1238–40	basin	Ahmad b. 'Umar, known as al-Dhaki	al-Mawsili		octagon	al-Malik al-Adil II Sayf al-Din Abu Bakr	Louvre
1242	ewer	Ahmad b. 'Umar, known as al-Dhaki	al-Mawsili				Keir Collection
1225	candlestick	Abu Bakr b. al-Hajji Jaldak	al-Mawsili		octagon		Boston MFA
1226	ewer	'Umar ibn Hajji Jaldak	al-Mawsili		octagon		MET, New York

c)

1246	ewer	Yunus b. Yusuf	al-Mawsili		octagon		Walters Art Museum
1248	candlestick	Dawud b. Salama	al-Mawsili		octagon		Louvre
1225–50	candlestick				octagon		Nasser D. Khalili Collection
1225–50	candlestick				octagon		Doha MIA
1225–50	candlestick				octagon and moon		MET, New York
1243	incense-burner				octagon		British Museum
1225–50	box				octagon		ex-Christie's
1245	pen-box	Abu'l Qasim b. Sa'd bim Muhammad	al-Is'irdi		octagon		Louvre
1225–50	jug		al-Wasiti		octagon		unknown

TABLE 1.2 Inlaid metalwork attributable to Mosul: (a) items whose inscriptions provide direct, contingent or circumstantial evidence of a connection to Mosul (b) items by Ahmad al-Dhaki and his assistant Ibn Jaldak (c) items that have no inscriptional evidence linking them to Mosul, but include the octagon motif illustrated in Fig. 1.9.

Place	Date	Object	Artist	Dedicatee
Damascus	655/1257	candlestick	Husayn Muhammad	Rasulid vizier
Damascus	657/1259	ewer	Husayn Muhammad	Ayyubid ruler
Cairo	668/1269	candlestick	Muhammad Hasan*	anon.
Cairo	674/1275–76	ewer	ʻAli Husayn Muhammad	Rasulid ruler
Cairo	681/1282	candlestick	ʻAli Husayn Muhammad	Imad al-Din eunuch
Cairo	684/1285–86	basin	ʻAli Husayn	anon.
Cairo	1296–1322	tray	Husayn Ahmad Husayn**	Rasulid ruler
Damascus	1296–99	candlestick	ʻAli Kasirat	Mamluk ruler

Key

* The inscription indicates that the maker was deceased.

** This is how the name is read in Dimand 1931, p. 324, and RCEA vol. XIV, no 5454, which Mayer says is how Martinovitch read it. However, it is given as Ahmad b. Husayn by Mayer 1959: 29, and Atıl, Chase and Jett 1985, cat. no 22: 80. The longer name has kindly been confirmed by Sheila Canby (correspondence 30 August 2011).

TABLE I.3 Al-Mawsili craftsmen documented in Cairo or Damascus in the second half of the thirteenth century.

NOTES

1 I write this article with a deep sense of indebtedness to James Allan, who has been my teacher, mentor, colleague and friend. I hope he will accept it as a small token of thanks for all his contributions to the study of Islamic metalwork, and for the inspirational lectures he delivered on the subject in Oxford.

2 I owe special thanks to Robert Foy, who helped me in numerous ways, especially in creating an illustrated database of documented items. Friends in numerous collections have been exceptionally obliging, providing information and images. In several cases, they have spent a lot of time allowing me access to the objects, and for their patience and generosity I would particularly like to thank: Venetia Porter at the British Museum; Tim Stanley at the Victoria and Albert Museum; Sophie Makariou at the Louvre; Anatoli Ivanov at the Hermitage; Stefan Weber at the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin; Sheila Canby at the Metropolitan Museum; Amy Landau at the Walters Art Museum; Laura Weinstein at the MFA, Boston; Bashir Mohamed on behalf of the Furusiyya Foundation; and William Robinson and Sara Plumbly at Christie's. Others have been patient in dealing with enquiries and generous in supplying photographs. Here I would like to thank Nahla Nassar at the Nasser D. Khalili Collection; Hélène Bendejacq at the Louvre; Adel Adamova at the Hermitage; Jane Portal at the MFA, Boston; Ruth Bowler at the Metropolitan Museum; Louise Mackie, Tehnyat Majid and Deirdre Vodanoff at the Cleveland Museum of Art; Oliver Watson and Aisha al-Khater at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha; Dr Claudius Müller, then Director of the Staatliches Museum für Volkerkunde, Munich; Kjeld von Folsach at the David Collection in Copenhagen; Bernard O'Kane in Cairo; and Mariam Rosser-Owen and Moya Carey at the Victoria and Albert Museum. I would also like to thank Rozanna Ballian of the Benaki for sending me a copy of her recent article before it went to press. Sheila Blair was very generous in providing a critique, but the remaining flaws are my responsibility.

3 Melikian-Chirvani 1974.

4 Given that a geographic sobriquet (*nisbah*) such as 'al-Mawsili' (a man from Mosul) does not necessarily indicate that the respective individual was living in Mosul, I have employed the term 'Mawsili' to refer to craftsmen who used the *nisbah al-Mawsili* regardless of where they were active, and *Mosuli* only to those known to have been based in Mosul itself.

5 Although Kashan ceramics include many dated objects, and a good number with signatures, there are few instances where an artist signs himself 'al-Kashani'; and there are also few objects in the names of notables. On the other hand we do know a good deal about family relationships (Sarre 1935; Watson 1985).

6 At about the time that Michelangelo Lanci (1845–46) published a good number of silver-inlaid brasses of the thirteenth century, mostly from Italian collections, the eminent collector and publisher in Paris Eugène Piot surprisingly said that he knew of only four such objects (*pace* Reinaud's publication of the Blacas Collection) (Piot 1844: 387). The collection of the banker Louis Fould included by 1861 a sizeable number of examples of inlaid metalwork, though the majority of these appear to have been fourteenth-century Mamluk (Chabouillet 1861). The appeal of Islamic inlaid metalwork also lay in their affiliation to the European *azzimina* tradition (see Lavoix 1862; Lavoix 1877: 27–28). See also the contribution by Tim Stanley to this volume (Chapter 9).

7 The greater part of the collection was sold to the British Museum in 1866.

8 Cf. Rice 1957: 284.

9 Reinaud 1828; Lanci 1845–46 (the work was published, however, in only 125 copies). Lanci dedicated his study of a Kufic epitaph to Reinaud as a 'dono di amicizia' (Lanci 1819: esp. 4). See also Lanci 1845–46, vol. II: 107.

10 'Nous en avons vu de Nour-ed-din Mahmoud, de Salah-ed-din, de Masoud, de Zenghi, de tous ces sultans qui vivaient à la fin du XIIe siècle': Lavoix 1862: 66. There is a solar quadrant inscribed to Nur al-Din Zangi, but it is not inlaid; see Casanova 1923; Paris c.1993: 436.

11 Lavoix 1878: 783. Cf. Lavoix 1885: 294, 296.

12 Lavoix 1878: 786. Lavoix's dating was followed by van Berchem (1904: 22).

13 Lane-Poole 1886a: 151–200; Lane-Poole 1886b: 180–240; Lane-Poole 1893–94.

14 Lane-Poole 1886a: 159, 183–86; Lane-Poole 1886b: 189, 220–23.

15 Migeon played a major part in building the Louvre's collection of inlaid metalwork: Migeon 1899: 463. Cf. Henri Cordier 1898: 258.

16 Migeon (1899: 467–68) claimed two items in the Piet-Lataudrie Collection to be twelfth-century Mosul work, but Friedrich Sarre (1903: 527–28) pointed out that the ewer of 1190 bears the name of the city of Nakhjavan in Azerbaijan, and the *repoussé* candlestick belonged to a group all found in Iran. Cf. Migeon 1907: 179.

17 Migeon 1903: 'Introduction', 2–3 and Pls 9–22; Paris 1903: 15.

18 Differences occur in the attributions in the handlist and the commemorative album of the 1903 exhibition.

19 Sarre 1903: esp. 527–29.

20 Josz 1903: 818: 'car rien n'est encore plus arbitraire que c'est classification'. Josz, who wrote books on Watteau and Fragonard, even cited Migeon's own doubts on the subject.

21 Van Berchem 1904: esp. 27ff.

22 Van Berchem 1904: 39–40. Three years later he claimed it was difficult to distinguish 'Mosul' from 'Syro-Egyptian' work, which suggests that he recognised the problems with his classification (Sarre and van Berchem 1907: esp. 35.)

23 Van Berchem 1906: 210, n. 1; Sarre and van Berchem 1907: 33–37.

24 Van Berchem 1906: 210, n. 1; Sarre and van Berchem 1907: 33–37, esp. 35.

25 Sarre and van Berchem 1907: 18–19; cf. Sarre 1904: 49. See also Sarre and Mittwoch 1906: 12; cf. Sarre and van Berchem 1907: 35, n. 1.

26 Van Berchem 1904: 27ff; Migeon 1907: 165ff., see esp. 171–73; Migeon 1922: 16; Migeon 1926: 34; Migeon 1927: 37–38.

27 Dimand 1926: 195; Dimand 1930: 110ff.; Dimand 1934: 18; Dimand 1941: 209; Dimand 1944: 144–48.

28 Kühnel 1924–25: 100–1. Kühnel's position evidently became more pro-Mosul with time: Munich 1912, Text volume, unnumbered pages, but fifth page of section 'Die Metallarbeiten', where he attributed some works to Aleppo; Kühnel 1925: 147; Kühnel 1971a: 169.

29 Cf. Kühnel 1939: 9; Dimand 1944: 148.

30 Dimand 1934: 18, 21; Dimand 1926: 196; Dimand 1930: 113; Kühnel 1939: 13–14.

31 Wiet 1932; Harari 1938–39.

32 Rice 1957a: 320–21; Scerrato 1967: 8.

33 Ağa-Oğlu 1945: esp. 32, 35–37.

34 He did, however, know the ewer produced in Damascus in 1259; see Ağa-Oğlu 1945: 41.

35 Rice 1957: 286; van Berchem 1904: 33.

36 Rice 1949: 334.

37 Rice 1950b; Rice 1957a: 285.

38 Rice 1957a: 320.

39 Rice 1957a: 320. The same graffito occurs, as Rice notes, on the other surviving object by Ibn Jaldak, the ewer in the Metropolitan Museum. Alternative readings would be 'the harem of 'Afif al-Muzaffari' or 'the wife of 'Afif al-Muzaffari'. On the different meanings of *dar*, see van Berchem 1903: 188; Wiet 1958: 245. See below, n. 40.

40 Rice 1949: 339.

41 Humphreys 1977: 173. He was not a eunuch, whereas Rice assumed 'Afif was the eunuch who supervised the harem.

42 Rice 1949: 339, n. 35.

43 Amedroz 1902: 804; Patton 1991, esp. 44–46, 87–88. The date of his father's death is a matter of dispute.

44 On Rasulid Muzaffars see van Berchem 1904: 71, n. 1. On Badr al-Din's son, see Patton 1991, index, s.v. al-Muzaffar 'Ali, 'Ala al-Din b. Lu'lu'. One of the only inlaid medieval

items known to have been produced in San'a was made for 'Afif al-Dunya wa'l Din 'Ali: Wiet 1932: 49, and esp. 78–80, no 3259; 97, Pl. LXIV; Porter 1988: 229; Allan 1986e, cat. p. 37.

45 Rice (1957a: 319) compared it to several graffiti he termed 'redundant', where the graffito refers to the person honoured in the vessel's dedicatory inscription, and begins with the phrase *bi-rasm*. Neither applies in this case, and these differences mean the graffito may relate to a subsequent owner. The use of the phrase *bi-rasm* on graffiti is complex. By itself it does not prove that the named individual was the original owner, since it was often used to introduce the name of a later owner. Examples suggests that, when used in grafitti, *bi-rasm* was necessary but not sufficient to indicate original ownership; *mutatis mutandis*, the absence of *bi-rasm* was sufficient but not necessary to indicate subsequent ownership.

46 Rice 1957a: 319.

47 In 1949 Rice thought al-Dhaki was working in Syria. In 1957 he proposed Syria or Egypt: Rice 1957a: 311.

48 Rice 1957a, Pls 5 and 8. There are further contradictions in Rice's argument, illustrated by his discussion of the Blacas ewer (1957a, esp. 322), and I suspect that they may in part result from unresolved changes prompted by an editor.

49 Rice assumed that inlaid objects with Christian motifs, such as the Homberg ewer, were from Syria. He did not, however, invoke other pieces in his definition of a Syrian or Egyptian style, such as the box in the Victoria and Albert Museum dedicated, like Ahmad al-Dhaki's Louvre basin, to al-Malik al-'Adil II (Lane-Poole 1886a: 173–74 and Fig. 80; Lane-Poole 1893–94: 909).

50 The Blacas ewer uses a 'straight' and a 'wavy' version of the T-fret ground (Figs 1.4b and 1.4a, respectively). This is the earliest instance I know of the 'wavy' version.

51 These are rarely illustrated, but see Rice 1957a, Fig. 31a.

52 Rice 1957a: 320.

53 On the Louvre basin Ahmad al-Dhaki does not call himself 'al-Mawsili'. His signature is in a key position on the outside of the basin, and it is even possible that such an object may have been a gift from the artist himself (cf. Raby and Tanındı 1993: 89–90; Los Angeles 2011: 162–64, cat. 74).

54 See below, n. 76.

55 Also known as Occam's Razor after the fourteenth-century Oxford scholar William of Ockham.

56 Rice 1957a: 284, n. 9. Rice did not ask if al-Dhaki's basin might have been an export or a gift from Mosul, but he did wonder whether the Blacas ewer might have been made for export 'to be carried to princes' and 'designed to satisfy "foreign tastes"', an idea he then rejected (Rice 1957a: 322).

57 Rice 1952b: 573; Harari 1938–39: 2490, n. 3.

58 Muhammad b. Khutlukh al-Mawsili produced an incense-burner in Damascus, and a geomantic table in 639/1241–42, but it has yet to be determined where that instrument

was made (see Table 1.1). If in Damascus too, he is the earliest of the Mawsili metalworkers to be documented as having emigrated.

59 'Documentary' here refers to objects with any combination of signatures, dedications and dates, and Table 1.1 draws on the list of craftsmen compiled by Wiet (1932), Kühnel (1939b), Rice (1957a: 286), Allan (1986: 39–40), and Auld (2009: 69–71).

60 The cautious expression 'some 27' reflects uncertainty over whether Isma'il b. Ward and al-Hajj Isma'il were one and the same craftsman (see above, p. 24, and n. 68), and whether Abu Bakr ibn Al-Hajji Jaldak and 'Umar ibn Hajji Jaldak were the same person.

61 Acc. no 6/1997: von Folsach 2001: 317, no 506.

62 Kamal ibn Man'a, for example, was a celebrated teacher of science, in particular geometry, who was patronised by Badr al-Din Lu'lu', though we do not know the family relationship between him and Shuja': Patton 1991: 66. On some noted members of the family see Ibn Khallikan (Paris 1842–45) vol. I: 90–92; II: 656–59; IV: 597–98.

63 RCEA vol. XI, no 4361; Wiet 1932: 178, no 66.

64 There are few dated candlesticks in Table 1.1 on which to build a morphology. However, the body of Hajj Isma'il's and Muhammad ibn Fattuh's candlestick has sides with a slight curvature compared to the much straighter walls of Ibn Jaldak's candlestick of 1225; straighter sides seem to be a feature of the earliest examples and give way to slightly curved walls in the 1230s. There are also some differences in the mouldings that relate to candlesticks attributable to the 1230s and 1240s on stylistic grounds.

65 In 1953 Rice believed that Lanci's attribution of Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya's ewer to Mosul had 'much to commend it' (Rice 1953b: 78), but he did not pursue the implications.

66 James 1980: 320. The number of months should read four not three.

67 James Allan accepts that Isma'il ibn Ward worked in Mosul (1982: 56; 2009: 499).

68 His piety is not in doubt from the manuscript he copied later in life, but there he refers to himself as a *naqqash*, and twice on the Benaki box to his work as *naqsh*. Al-Hajj Isma'il, however, takes credit for making (*'amal*) the candlestick, not for inlaying it, which was done by Muhammad b. Fattuh: RCEA vol. XI, no 4361. Kühnel (1939: 10) wondered if the two Isma'ils were not one and the same person.

69 'Umar ibn Khidr al-Maliki al-Badri, whose *nisbah* clearly connects him to Badr al-Din Lu'lu', made a massive door for the shrine of Imam 'Awn al-Din in Mosul in 646/1248–49: RCEA vol. XI.2, no 4291; Sarre and Herzfeld 1911–20, vol. I: 21; vol. II: 269; vol. III, Pl. viii. See Ward 2004: 349 on the multiple skills of some of the metalworkers of the period, arguing against the assumption that metalworkers always specialised in only one technique or material.

70 With regard to Najm al-Din, Rice (1957a: 285) overlooks his previous article on the Bologna bowl (Rice 1953c: 232–38). However, Wiet (1932: 179, no 72) identified Najm al-Din as a functionary of Badr al-Din.

71 *Pace* Corbin in Corbin, Cottevielle-Giraudet and David-Weill 1938: 194–95, cat. no 205; Mayer 1959: 83.

72 Sarre and van Berchem 1907: 33–37, esp. 33; Sobernheim 1905, esp. 199. Kühnel (1939: 10) included Muhammad ibn 'Absun (*sic*) in his list of Mosul metalworkers. *Pace* Rice 1950b: 634 and Mayer (1959), who did not include him in his *Dictionary of Islamic Metalworkers*.

73 Van Berchem 1906: 205–6, and van Berchem 1978: 667–68.

74 As van Berchem (1906: 206, n. 1) observes, it does not mean it was made for Badr al-Din's buttery, which is, however, the way it is read in RCEA vol. XII: 38–39, no 4456. It is worth noting that Rice's reproduction of the graffito on the Badr al-Din Lu'lu' tray in the Victoria and Albert Museum is a little misleading. It is clear that someone originally wrote *bi-rasm al-sharāb khānah al-malikī* and then altered it to *al-malikiyya al-badriyya*.

75 Van Berchem (1906: 205) was unsure whether the reading should be *'Absun* or *'Isun*, though subsequent scholars have mostly preferred *'Absun*. However, detailed photos kindly provided me by Dr Claudius Müller make it clear that the reading should be *'Isun*. as James Allan read the inscription in Allan 1976a: 180, cat. no 197. On the custom of including inlaid metalwork in trousseaux in the Mamluk period, see Maqrizi 1853, vol. II: 105; Lane-Poole 1886: 165–66; cf. Ibn Battuta 1853–58, vol. I: 136.

76 Kratchkovskaya 1947: 19; Grabar 1957: 549.

77 I am extremely grateful to Anatoli Ivanov for providing me with very useful images of this basin.

78 Rice 1953c: 232: it 'was made for the amir of an Ayyubid ruler and is almost certainly Syrian'. Cf. Rice 1953b: 66–69. Atıl (1985: 117) expressly attributes it to Syria, though on p.120 she qualifies this: 'it is more likely that Qasim ibn Ali worked in Syria, since his patron, Shihab al-Din Tughril, was residing in Aleppo'; cf. Atıl 1975, no 26; cf. RCEA vol. X, no 3977, with a faulty reading of the date.

79 Sauvaget 1941: 133; Rice 1953b: 68. Qasim ibn 'Ali states he completed the ewer in the month of Ramadan. For another afigural ewer, made by Iyas, see Rice 1953c: 230–32.

80 Ibn al-Adim-Blochet 1897: 82, 84. Tughril moved from the citadel to a residence opposite its main gate.

81 There was presumably a companion basin, but the only complete sets are those in Berlin (Kühnel 1939b) and, arguably, in Tehran (Wiet 1931).

82 Rice 1953c: 234, where he also claims that this is 'a set row of epithets which often appear in the same sequence'. However, the only reference he gives is to the 1232 ewer. The same combination of epithets but in the sequence *al-'ābid*, *al-zāid*, *al-wari'* occur on two tombstones from Mecca, one dated 592/1196 (Paris 2010: 514, cat. no 296), the other 627/1229 (RCEA vol. XI.1, no 4017). For the partial use of this group of epithets (*al-'ābid*, *al-zāid* without *al-wari'*) on closely contemporary objects, see RCEA vol. XI.1: 117, no 4176 (princely tombstone, Damascus c.642/1244); 172, no 4259 (tomb of mother of Rum Seljuk sultan Kaykhusraw II, Kayseri, c.644/1246); cf. RCEA vol. XII: 155, no 4633, anno 670/1271; RCEA vol. XIII: 206, no 5103, anno 700/1300. For a rare use of some of these epithets (*al-zāid*, *al-'ābid*) in an inscription referring to someone who was

not deceased, see RCEA vol. XII: 65, no 4488. The word *al-wari'* appears to occur in the 'animated' inscription of the Freer canteen. It is incorrectly given as *al-wad'* in Atıl, Chase and Jett 1985: 124.

83 On al-Malik al-'Aziz preferring the advice of younger companions, see Ibn Khallikan 1842–45, vol. IV: 432.

84 Patton 1991b: 85, n. 13.

85 Ibn Khallikan 1842–45, vol. II: 289.

86 A box now in Naples is inscribed in the name of al-Malik al-'Aziz. In contrast to Tughril's ewer, its decoration includes lively figural scenes. On the basis of the titulature in the dedicatory inscription, and the reference in a graffito to the Palace of Marble, which most probably relates to the palace in the Citadel built by al-'Aziz Muhammad in 628/1231, Umberto Scerrato dated the box to between 1231 and 1233: Scerrato 1967, cat. 7: 7–12. Two years earlier Scerrato (1966: 94, 107) dated it 'circa 1230', but without discussion of the inscriptions. Where this box was made is not known. Whether it too was a present from Mosul cannot be proved, but there were at least two major occasions when Badr al-Din might have seen fit to send presents: one was when al-Malik al-'Aziz assumed full control of government in 629, or in Ramadan that year when his prospective bride, the daughter of al-Malik al-Kamil, arrived from Cairo.

87 *Pace* Migeon 1900: 126, who believed the Barberini vase was produced in Syria, most probably in Aleppo, as it is in the name of the Ayyubid al-Malik al-Nasir II Salah al-Din Yusuf, who ruled Aleppo from 634/1237 until his death in October 1260. He failed to notice, though, that Salah al-Din Yusuf was also ruler of Damascus from 648/1250, and that the ewer of 1259 was made for him in Damascus itself. Kühnel (1938: 24) attributes another object, a candlestick in Istanbul dedicated to a Malik Ghiyath al-Din, to Aleppo, but I suspect this is a misunderstanding of the inscription. The lack of evidence for Aleppo producing inlaid metalwork compares vividly with the evidence for it producing exceptional glassware. Cf. Auld 2009: 47.

88 Eddé 1999: 533; Ibn al-Shihna-Sauvaget 1933: 14; Sauvaget 1941: 150. Al-Nasir Yusuf was some seven years old when he acceded to the throne, and the regency was in the hand of his grandmother Dayfa Khatun until her death in 1242. See Tabbaa 2000, esp. 19.

89 Al-'Ubaydi 1970: 24, citing Ibn Kathir *al-Bidāya wa'l-nihāya*, vol. XIII: 214, anno 656.

90 Van Berchem 1906: 198 and van Berchem 1978: 660

91 On Mosul's textiles, see von Wilckens 1989.

92 Patton 1991b: 96, quoting Qirtay al-'Izzi al-Khizandari; cf. Patton 1991: 38.

93 Rice 1957a: 284. To get a sense of the comparative cost of such items, see Eddé 1999: 557.

94 Ibn Shaddad, *Al-A'lāq al-khaṭira fi dhikr umarā' al-Shām wa'l Jazīra*, Berlin Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung, MS Sprenger 199 (Ahlwardt, no 9800), fol. 41a, line 18. Patton (1991: 85) translates *ālāt* as 'articles', Cahen (1934: 121) suggests the 20,000 dinars were in addition to the presents. Every year between 649/1251 and 656/1258 Badr al-Din incorporated al-Nasir Yusuf's name on his coinage: Zambaur 1914: 153–57; Patton 1991: 46. See Maqrizi 1853, vol. II: 424, line 4.

95 This is most conveniently seen in the images in Atıl, Chase and Jett 1985: 117, 121, Fig. 47. The handle of Qasim ibn 'Ali's ewer is slightly more fussy in the treatment of the flanges that connect it to the body and neck, and in the round finial. Al-Dhaki's ewer is 36.5cm high, Qasim ibn 'Ali's 36.7cm, but the base of al-Dhaki's has been reworked.

96 *Pace* al-'Ubaydi 1970: 174, scholars have ignored this octagon motif entirely, though its possible importance was recognised in the auction catalogue entry for an inlaid metal box sold at Christie's London, Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds, 6 October 2011, lot 130. The motif appears in several different sizes, ranging from 16 to 33mm, including sometimes on the same object. This suggests that it may have been worked from memory rather than a cartoon. A related hexagon appears on other works, though these all appear to be from the second half of the century. They include the ewer by 'Ali ibn 'Abdallah and the candlestick made in Cairo in 1269, and it remains to be established what links, if any, existed between these objects.

97 Despite a gap of seventy years, the layout of Dawud ibn Salama's 1248 candlestick, with two friezes of standing figures under lobed arcades framing the top and bottom of the body, is closely echoed in the candlestick dated 1317 in the Benaki Museum (Combe 1931; Ballian 2009). As this was made in all probability for an Artuqid ruler of Mardin, it seems likely that the schema was Mosuli, and that Dawud ibn Salama operated there rather than in Syria, as is often assumed.

98 The candlestick in the Khalili Collection (see n. 138) has the same form of elaborate arcading as the 1225 Ibn Jaldak candlestick in Boston; it also has figures against a plain ground, and figures arranged in several registers, sometimes with diminutive figures in a lively scene in the bottom register; and both these candlesticks have a frieze of chasing animals on the lower skirt. Both the Khalili and the Doha candlestick with a frieze of mounted warriors, to be discussed later, are framed top and bottom by an inscriptional band in knotted Kufic, punctuated by the octagon. There are knotted inscriptional bands in the same positions on the Ibn Jaldak candlestick, but the Kufic is plainer and the *hastae* terminate in human heads. The candlestick in the Metropolitan Museum has a knotted Kufic inscription but it encircles the middle of the body; overall, this candlestick is more elaborate, and may date to a decade or so later than the others, as its ground displays a similar 'wavy T-fret' as the upper body of the Blacas ewer of 1232.

99 Is it possible that the octagon served to indicate a level of status in the guild or workshop, which would explain why it was not used by Muhammad ibn Fattuh, who was a hireling (*ajir*)? It is clear, however, from Ahmad al-Dhaki's work that a craftsman was not obligated to use it.

100 Muhammad ibn Khutlukh is known for an incense-burner that he produced in Damascus, but it seems likely that he was primarily a maker of scientific instruments such as the geomantic table he made in 639/1241–42, as he introduces his name on both objects with the word *san'at* (work of). This was used on objects whose 'dimensions were based on mathematical or astronomical calculations', and was thus standard on instruments such

as astrolabes, but highly uncommon on table and other metalwares (Rice 1953c: 230; but cf. Baer 1983: 339, n. 238). On Muhammad ibn Khutlukh, see Allan 1986: 66–69, cat. no 1. Iyas also uses *san'at* on his ewer of 627/1229–30, in which he records that he was the *ghulam* of 'Abd al-Karim ibn al-Turabi al-Mawsili, whom Rachel Ward has forcefully argued was likely to have been the astrolabe-maker 'Abd al-Karim al-Misri (Ward 2004: 248. See also below, n. 152).

101 It remains unclear whether al-Hajj Isma'il is to be identified as Isma'il b. Ward. See above, p. 24 and n. 68.

102 Christie's London 2009, lot 31.

103 Dimand 1926: 196; Dimand 1934: 16, 21; Kühnel 1939: 14–19; see also van Berchem 1906: 201; Karabacek 1908: 16.

104 Ağa-Oğlu 1945: 42–43; Rice 1957a: 321.

105 The relief rosette does not occur on the ewer by Qasim ibn 'Ali. It has been queried whether the current base is original, as it is poorly formed, but it has the same analytical composition as the body (Atıl, Chase and Jett 1985: 122). Nor does the rosette occur on the base of the ewer in the name of Abu'l Qasim Mahmud ibn Sanjarshah (see Table 1.1). James Allan in his discussion of this ewer notes a 12-petal rosette, but this refers to the entire base which is gadrooned, rather than to a small central relief rosette on a stem (Allan 1982a: 54). The origins of the Mosul rosette may trace back to Herat, as the Bobrinsky bucket has, in the centre of its base, a small disk on a stem, with decorative petals inlaid with alternating cooper and silver petals rather than the *repoussé* petals seen in the Mosul group: Glück and Diez 1925: 451, ill. For two later versions of the relief form of rosette, the first with eight lobes, the second with ten, see the mosque lamp produced in Konya in 679/1280–81 (Rice 1955a, esp. Pl. 1) and the underside of the Mamluk incense-burner made for Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun (Allan 1982a: 86–89, cat. no 15). A similar-looking rosette is used as a finial on an intriguing domed casket in the Furusiyya Art Foundation (Etude Tajan, Paris, Art Islamique, 7 November 1995, lot 365). This object deserves fuller study. It is an unusual form, yet carries banal inscriptions of the Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya type (see the following note).

106 On inscriptions that consist overwhelmingly of blessings, see Baer 1983: 208–12, though she does not identify the peculiarities of the Mawsili group. The inscriptions on the ewer by Qasim ibn 'Ali and on the Freer canteen are related to, but simpler than, what we might call the 'Ibrahim b. Mawaliya type' (Atıl, Chase and Jett 1985: 118, 124). Those on the ewer in the name of Abu'l Qasim Mahmud ibn Sanjarshah, which Allan has attributed to the workshop of Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya (Allan 1982a: 54–57, cat. no 6), are even simpler variants. Intriguingly, the Blacas ewer and the candlestick by Muhammad b. Fattuh have banal inscriptions that differ from the 'Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya type' (Allan 1976a: 179, cat. no 196; *The Arts of Islam*: 182, cat. no 200). Few catalogues of such inscriptions have been published, but nothing similar is to be found in Sarre and Mittwoch 1906, with the exception of p. 25, cat. no 53 (B147). In Melikian-Chirvani's

catalogue of Iranian metalwork in the Victoria and Albert Museum, there are only three inscriptions of this type. Cat. 72 is on a cast brass stem-bowl that Melikian-Chirvani attributes to West Iran in the second or third quarter of the thirteenth century; James Allan (1977c: 160) initially supported this attribution, but for his re-attribution of the type to Anatolia or the Jazira, see Allan and Maddison 2002: 80, cat. no 25; see also Rice 1955b: 14 on the example in Naples, which, it turns out, has a banal inscription of the 'Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya type' (Scerrato 1967: 2–3, cat. 2). The two other items are a candlestick and a ewer (respectively, V&A inv. nos 333–1892; 381–1897, Melikian-Chirvani 1982: 166–73, cat. no 74–75); Melikian-Chirvani attributes both to western Iran, and relates their inscriptions to items found in the Baznegerd hoard, found near Hamadan (see esp. 172). Intriguingly, both these items make extensive use of the seated figure holding a crescent moon. See Ağa-Oğlu 1945: 43, n. 132. The only instances of the 'Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya type' of banal inscription cited by Lanci (1845–46, vol. II: 124, 129, 145) are from items signed by Mawsili artists or, in the case of the Bologna bowl, here attributed to Mosul. See also Reinaud 1828, vol. II: 420–21, and Mittwoch in Sarre 1905: 86.

107 Another connection can be found in what Rice (1957a: 295) described as 'probably the most remarkable among the unusual scenes of the Cleveland ewer' – 'a youth nonchalantly reclining on a couch'. The same scene (Fig. 1.12b) can be found on the shoulder of the candlestick in the Metropolitan Museum, inv. no 1891 91.1.563, which I have connected to Mosul (see p. 45 and Figs 1.20 and 1.21).

108 Ettinghausen and Grabar 1987: 366; Ettinghausen, Grabar, Jenkins-Madina 2001: 247–48. Cf. Ağa-Oğlu 1945: 41.

109 Kühnel (1939: 11) says he is 'Enkel von nr. 12 oder Neffe von Nr. 14'.

110 Husayn's ewer was made in 657/1259 for the ruler of Aleppo and Damascus, al-Malik al-Nasir II Salah al-Din Yusuf (r.1237–60). (Following Lavoix 1878: 786, van Berchem [1904: 22] gives the date of the ewer as 659AH). The candlestick was made in 655/1257 for a Taj al-Din Abu Durr Badr, who has been identified as an amir of the Rasulid Sultan al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf. Abu Durr Badr actually died in 654AH, but presumably news took time to reach Damascus from the Yemen. (James Allan in Louisiana 1987: 62 and 91, cat. no 62; Paris c.1993: 469, cat. no 373; Paris 2001: 148, cat. no 125.) On Taj al-Din Badr's architectural patronage in Yemen, see Giunta 1997: 123–30. On features of its main script, see below, p. 42 and Fig. 1.16. The Kufic on the shaft of the neck of Husayn's candlestick shares a number of idiosyncrasies with that on a candlestick in the MFA Boston, acc. no 38.19. In turn the Boston candlestick relates in its decoration to an unpublished candlestick in the Hermitage. The knotted Kufic friezes in Fig. 1.15 are paralleled, however, by a band on the massive Ilkhanid basin in Berlin: Sarre and Mittwoch 1904, Fig. 2; Enderlein 1973, Tafel 2.

111 Allan 1986: 49–50; Allan in Louisiana 1987, cat. no 122; Ward 1993: 26.

112 On 'Ali ibn Husayn's 1282 candlestick and 1285 basin the medallions are bordered by thin frames.

113 James Allan in Louisiana 1987: 91, cat. no 123; see also Paris c.1993: 467. The titles 'al-Muzaffari' and 'al-Mansuri' appear in that order, and suggest that the unnamed dedicatee was connected to both sultans and that the object must therefore post-date 1259, while the lack of the word *maliki* suggests that both were deceased. I wonder, therefore, if so much importance should be placed on the graffito *khizanat nuriyya Hasan ibn Ayyub*, which has been taken to indicate that the basin was made for the treasury of al-Mansur Nur al-Din, and is thus datable to 1257–59. A further difficulty is that the inscription on the exterior refers to the dedicatee as *al-Mu'ayyadi*. The Rasulids were ruled by al-Mansur (1229–50), al-Muzaffar (1250–95), and al-Mu'ayyad (1296–1322), but the object surely cannot belong to the first quarter of the fourteenth century stylistically.

114 Sobernheim 1905: 177–9; van Berchem 1904: 36; Mayer 1933: 190–91.

115 Cairo MIA no 15153 (ex. Harari no 12): see RCEA vol. XIII, no 4991; Atıl 1981: 62–63, cat. no 14; O'Kane 2006, Fig. 102. Atıl dates the tray to circa 1290, but it more probably dates to the third quarter of the century, a conclusion also reached by Ballian (2009).

116 Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, acc. no 54.526, unpublished. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no 91.1.603. The basin now in Doha was formerly in the Nuhad es-Said Collection, see Allan 1982a: 76–79, cat. no 12, where it is attributed to Syria 1240–60.

117 Sobernheim 1905: 177–79; van Berchem 1904: 36; Mayer 1933: 190–91.

118 For the Lyon candlestick, see Melikian-Chirvani 1970: 46–53 (see also RCEA vol. XIII, no 4988). For the undated Munich basin, Sarre and van Berchem 1907. For a basin in Palermo, Spallanzani 2010: 121, Pl. 2. Melikian-Chirvani (1970: 148) emphasises the similarity in shape between the Lyon candlestick and that decorated by Muhammad b. Fattuh in 1232. Ballian (2009) notes the use of Y-fret on a basin in the Benaki Museum, perhaps made for the Rasulid al-Muzaffar Yusuf.

119 On the Boston basin (acc. no 50.3627), see Ward 2004: 353–54. She suggested it was made for Shihab al-Din Ghazi, ruler of Mayyafariqin (d.1247), and was later reworked for al-Nasir Yusuf II (d.1260). The main inscriptions have been tampered with, but there is a diminutive Kufic inscription on the interior which carries the full name and titles of Sultan Qalawun. I hope to publish this in the near future, and am extremely grateful to Laura Weinstein for allowing me to study it.

120 It occurs on the Barberini vase in the Louvre, which was made for the Ayyubid al-Malik al-Nasir Salah al-Din Yusuf of Damascus and Aleppo, who died in 1260 (see Table 1.1a). It can also be traced back to earlier work in Mosul, such as the Freer canteen; and Eva Baer (1972) has shown how it was used over an extended period in both Iran and the Near East in various media. Characteristic of this family's work in both Damascus and Cairo is a narrow border with an animal chase which is arguably distinctive in its choice of animals and in the extreme elongation of their bodies. (There is no detailed study of this, but see Baer 1983: 178–79; cf. Rice 1957a: 323; 'Izzi 1965: 257, 259, Figs 10, 11.)

121 A candlestick in the Furusiyya Art Foundation can be attributed to 'Ali ibn Husayn's workshop, as it uses similar 'static' roundels against a T-fret ground, though it differs in

having an inscriptional band running around the middle of the body. It must be close in date to the 1282 candlestick, and was presumably also made in Cairo. However, the script on the candlestick in the Furusiyya Art Foundation shows affinities to the examples in Fig. 1.16, including the Lajin candlestick. This raises questions about whether these examples should be attributed to Cairo rather than Damascus, or whether the same form of scripts was used in both cities. This was perfectly possible, as both cities may have had workshops that ultimately traced back to Husayn ibn Muhammad. Sotheby's London, Islamic Works of Art, Carpets and Textiles, 14 October 1987, lot 387.

122 Atıl 1981: 80–81, cat. no 22, with bibliography. This pictorial mode is well illustrated by the boating scene on the inside base of a large basin in the Victoria and Albert Museum, acc. no 2734-1856. The basin is not fully published, but see Lane-Poole 1893–94: 909; Baer 1977: 329 and Fig. 21; Baer 1983: Fig. 195.

123 Allan 2009: 502, col. 2.

124 Baer 1983: 181, 184–85, Fig. 159 for the Muhammad ibn Fattuh candlestick; Atıl 1981: 57–8, cat. no 10 for the 1269 candlestick. When scrollwork ending in animal heads was replaced by flying ducks is yet to be determined precisely, but it was certainly by the 1290s. On misguided attempts to read the duck as the 'armes parlantes' of Sultan Qalawun, see Mayer 1933: 7, 10, 26.

125 It would seem from the prominent position of this motif on this candlestick, and its recurrence on works by later generations of this family, that it may have held some significance for them, but it is probably far-fetched to think that the eagle-and-duck was an allegorical motif (like canting arms in heraldry) referring to Muhammad's father's name, Fattuh, which means 'Little Victor'. For details of this motif on this candlestick, see Baer 1983: 171 and Figs 142, 159.

126 Characteristic of these inscriptions is the use of 'hanging' letters; the *lam* of the *lam–alif* has a short, strongly curved base, while the lower part of the *alif* is tangent, not conjunct. The horizontal return of the *kaf* is set about one-fifth of the way down the *hasta*, and has a slight concave swing. The terminal *ya* can be compact, with a reflex tail that angles back acutely.

127 Atıl 1981: 80–81, cat. no 22.

128 Allan 1982a: 54–57, cat. no 6.

129 British Museum, acc. no 1954 0215 1.

130 Christie's London 2011, lot no 129.

131 Louvre, acc. no OA 7439.

132 Rice 1949; Rice 1957a: 323.

133 Doubts have been raised about the connection of this manuscript with Badr al-Din Lu'lu', but, first, the scribe of at least volumes I to XI styles himself, in the colophon to volume XI, as *al-Badri*; second, on the frontispieces to volumes XI, XVII, XIX and XX the main figure wears *tiraz* bands that read *Badr al-Din Lu'lu'* with or without *bin 'Abdallah*. Bishr Farès (1948, also 1953–54) queried the date of these inscriptions (see the rebuttal by Stern 1957), but he overlooked the braided frame surrounding the frontispiece of volume XVII, which has undecorated squares in its four corners that are inscribed, anti-clockwise

starting top right: (1) *Badr* (2) *al-Din* (3) *Lu'lu'* (4) *bin 'Abdallah*. This is a highly unusual feature, and there is little doubt that the scheme and inscriptions are original. See Rice 1953a: 130, and Fig. 18. (The frame inscriptions read more clearly in colour: see Sourdel-Thomine and Spuler 1973, Pl. XXX.) On the turbulent period during which this manuscript was being produced, when Lu'lu' was fighting for survival, see Patton 1991: 16ff.

134 Cf. for example, the central scene of an enthroned figure flanked by flying genii holding a canopy or veil over his head (Rice 1957a: 288 and Fig. 3) and Farès 1948, Pl. XI. Note too the unusual figure of the courtier looking away from the enthroned figure.

135 For a selection of such images, see Nassar 1985, Fig. 2. On the scene where the ruler is seated in three-quarter pose, and having his hand kissed in obeisance, see Rice 1953a: 134. On the candlestick in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, acc. no 1891 91.1.563, see Dimand 1926; Dimand 1944: 146–47; Baer 1983: 264–65.

136 Some of the silver inlay has fallen out, making it possible to see that the ground has been pitted where the long beard would have been, indicating that the silver inlay would have been worked to highlight the beard.

137 British Museum, acc. no OA 1969 9–22 1: Baer 1983: 147, Fig. 124. Auld 2009: 62 attributes it to the Mamluk period. On the painting, see Farès 1955, Pl. III.

138 A relationship with miniature painting may have extended beyond a link to frontispieces: scenes on a candlestick in the Nasser D. Khalili Collection (MTW 1252) have been linked to narrative painting: Paris 2001: 140–41, cat. no 114; Auld 2009: 56–58. Fehérvári (1976: 96) compares the enthronement scene on the Keir Collection candlestick to those in the *Kitab al-Aghani*, but it is considerably different in style and dates from the early part of the fourteenth century (*pace* al-Harithy 2001: 366).

139 Dimand 1934. In subsequent studies boundaries of place and patronage and even sectarian meaning became increasingly porous, and two of the most recent interpretations have centred on the notions of porosity, liminality and portability – an object of no fixed abode. Schneider 1973; Katzenstein and Lowry 1983; Baer 1989, passim; Khoury 1998; Hoffman 2004. See Ecker and Fitzherbert 2012. This is not the place for a detailed discussion, but I would contend that the imagery does not reflect a pan-sectarian concordat as some have implied; the imagery on the rear of the canteen has a polemic cast, with the outer band depicting the Annunciation followed by 25 saints, several of them military saints, while the inner band depicts not a friendly tourney (*pace* Schneider 1973) but a mounted battle between Muslims and Crusaders, who are clearly identifiable by their surcoats and pennants (Baer 1989: 46). For comparable scenes of Christian and Muslim knights in combat, see Paris 2003: 168, cat. nos 129–30. Some have doubted that the canteen shows a battle, but I find it difficult to accept this as a tourney or a parade when several of the figures are shooting crossbows. A more detailed rendering of a comparable scene occurs on a candlestick now in Doha (see below, n. 151, and Fig. 1.25), and there arrows can be seen flying. The two bands can be seen as complementary, one conveying a heavenly, the other the mundane, protection of the Christian community. The presence of Crusaders

does not imply that the object must have been made in Syria, as Crusaders were a known sight to some Mosulis, since there was a settlement of Mosul merchants in the Crusader town of Acre in the thirteenth century, and, according to Fiey, Badr al-Din even allowed the crusading army of St Louis to enter Mosul with pennants flying (Fiey [1959]: 46, but with no reference).

The evidence of form, iconography and style suggests that the canteen was not an object with generalised Eastern Christian imagery, nor a portable object made for a Christian client in Syria. Its imagery has strong links to that employed by the Syrian Jacobites of northern Iraq and eastern Turkey. It was more likely, then, to have been produced in Mosul rather than Syria where the Syriac Orthodox church enjoyed a limited presence at this time (Snelders 2010: 74, esp. no 20). The form of the canteen has encouraged scholars to label it a 'pilgrim flask', and to assume that the deep hole on the rear was to attach it to a pommel or a pole. There are, though, good structural reasons against this, and an alternative explanation is that the recess was intended to receive a glass reliquary, presumably intended to bless the large quantity of liquid contained by the canteen (see Ecker and Fitzherbert 2012). The canteen weighs 5kg, and, with a capacity of 3.6 US gallons, it would weigh 13.6kgs if filled with water, making a total of 18.6kg or 41lbs, a very substantial weight for an allegedly portative object. (I owe thanks to Blythe McCarthy for the information on the capacity.) The size of the canteen seems excessive if it contained water, as it could have been refilled with comparative ease, while its remarkable state of preservation suggests it was used infrequently and with care. The neck, which has an internal filter, seems small in comparison to the body, suggesting that the liquid was to be dispensed sparingly. With such a large capacity, the canteen most likely contained a liquid that would remain stable over a long period, such as an oil. An alternative explanation, then, is that it was intended to hold a precious liquid such as chrism (Gk Myrrhon).

140 Baer (1994) argues for a more diverse set of sources.

141 Respectively, British Library Add. 7170; Vatican MS. Syr. 559. Leroy 1964: 280, 310–13; and on the revised dating of the Vatican MS from Anno Graecorum 1531 to 1571/1219–20 to 1260, see Fiey 1975 and Brock 2002. For a full discussion, see Snelders 2010, Chapter IV. It is still a matter of debate whether the London lectionary was produced at Deir Mar Hananiya near Mardin, as Leroy proposed, or in or near Mosul.

142 The pictorial origin of another of the scenes – Christ's entry into Jerusalem – is more complex than has previously been assumed (Fig. 1.23), but here too the derivation is from a Jacobite lectionary cycle, though the only known exemplar dates from the early eleventh century and originates from near Mardin (British Library MS.Or.3372). This lectionary has traditionally been dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century, but can now be definitively attributed to the nephews of John of Qartmin, who was consecrated Bishop in 988 or a decade later (see Brock and Raby forthcoming). The Monastery of Qartmin (Mar Gabriel) is in the Tur 'Abdin. This newly established dating and provenance means that there is no immediate connection with Mosul in the thirteenth century. Yet a closer look at the image on the canteen reveals links to the Mar Mattai manuscript, even if not directly.

If we reverse the image on the canteen and flatten out its curvature, the similarities and contrasts between it and the scene in Or.3372 become more obvious still. (I would like to thank Robert Foy for adjusting the images to make this comparison clearer.) The principal difference is in the rendering of the building and its occupants. The building on the canteen bears a close resemblance, though, to that shown in the entry into Jerusalem in both the British Library lectionary datable to 1216–20 and the Mar Mattai lectionary in the Vatican. Fig. 1.23 is a composite image that combines sections from the entry into Jerusalem from Or.3372 and from the Mar Mattai lectionary. Liberty has been taken in removing the tier of nimbed spectators in an upper window, but the result reveals how closely related the building in the Mar Mattai manuscript is to the version on the Freer canteen, and that even the posture of the hands of the front figure inside in the building is similar. (The front figure in both manuscripts does not, however, carry a child on his shoulders, as on the canteen.) This suggests that the craftsman who decorated the canteen relied on a later derivative of Or.3372 that was closer in date and milieu to the Vatican manuscript, that is to the Mosul region in the first half to mid-thirteenth century. This derivative may also have included the Z-meander border which appears on both Or.3372 and the Freer canteen.

143 The *flabellum* in the Musée Royal de Mariemont in Belgium was published by Leroy 1974–75, and recently by Snelders 2010: 104–50, with further references; he also publishes the stone sculpture found in Mosul in 2005 (115–16). The second *flabellum* has, however, been largely overlooked. It is in the Louvre, acc. no OA 7947; see St Petersburg 2008: 338, cat. no 251. On the close relations between the monasteries of the Mosul region and the Deir al-Suriani, see Snelders 2010: 127 ff., esp. 138–48, 194 on the political role the Deir al-Suriani played in the schism affecting the Syriac community in the Jazira.

144 It is intriguing, however, that in the twelfth century – presumably some time between his ordination in 1126 and his death in 1165 – Bishop John of Mardin ordered metal objects, described as exceptional, not from Mosul but from Alexandria: Assemani 1719–28, vol. II: 225.

145 As already noted by Marian Wenzel in Sotheby's London 1992, lot no 52.

146 The canteen has three roundels containing a seated figure holding a crescent moon, and while the significance of this motif remains uncertain, it certainly occurs on several objects of undoubted Mosul provenance (cf. Table 1.2a–c).

147 Muqaddasi-de Goeje: 145 (see also Lombard 1974: 166); Amedroz 1902: 787.

148 Allan 1976/77.

149 I hope to return to these two topics in another article. On Siirt as a metalworking centre, see Allan 1977, Allan 1978, Allan 1982: 58–61 and Allan 2009: 499, col. 1; cf. Atıl 1972; Soucek 1978, cat. nos 69–70; Melikian-Chirvani 1985. However, their discussion is not primarily focused on the items signed by al-Is'irdi craftsmen: see Pevzner 1969.

150 By far the earliest evidence for brass inlaid with silver from Syria in this period is an unusually large astrolabe made in Damascus in 619/1222–23 for al-Malik al-Mu'azzam

'Isa. It was constructed (*sana'ahu*) by 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Sinan al-Ba'labakki al-Najjar, and the inlay work (*ta'tim*) was signed by al-Siraj al-Dimashqi, a muezzin and himself a maker of astrolabes. The positions of the markings were done by 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr al-Muqawwim al-Tabrizi. Three other examples of al-Siraj/Sarraj al-Dimashqi's work are known (King 1996–97; Mayer 1956: 83; van Cleempoel 2005: 210–16, for an astrolabe made in Damascus in 628/1230–31, though it is not silver-inlaid). Whether 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ba'labakki had any connection with Mosul is not known, but his Syrian contemporary, the celebrated mathematician, architect, engineer and globe-maker Qaysar ibn Abi'l Qasim studied in Mosul with one of the greatest polymaths of the era, Kamal al-Din ibn Yunus ibn Man'a, who could have been a relative of Shuja' ibn Man'a, the maker of the Blacas ewer (see above, n. 62). In 622/1225–26 Qaysar made a globe for the Ayyubid al-Malik al-Kamil Muhammad, inlaying the inscriptions in silver: Wiet 1932: 170, no 40; RCEA vol. X, no 3924; Mayer 1956: 80–81; Scerrato 1967, cat. no 38, who provides a photograph of the inscription; Savage-Smith 1985: 218–19, cat. no 30. From either the mid-century or the end of the century al-Sahl al-Naisaburi made an astrolabe with silver-inlaid figures on the rete for a ruler of Hama with the title al-Malik al-Muzaffar (Mayer 1956: 82–83, assigning it to the ruler from the close of the century; the object is reproduced in colour in Bott, Willers, Holzamer 1983, cat. no 2; but see David King in Paris c.1993: 432–34 for issues on the dating). Ibrahim al-Dimashqi 669/1270 made an astrolabe, a plate of which is now in the British Museum (acc. no 90 3-15 3), but he only inlaid the star points.

151 Allan 1986: 66–69, cat. no 1.

152 See n. 100 above on 'Abd al-Karim ibn al-Turabi al-Mawsili and Iyas, who produced an inlaid ewer. (Cf. Baer 1983: 339, n. 242 on an astrolabist who made the cover of a pen-box). If 'Abd al-Karim ibn al-Turabi al-Mawsili and 'Abd al-Karim al-Misri were one and the same person, as Rachel Ward has argued (2004b), it is instructive: he is the only Mawsili metalworker of the thirteenth century to employ a *nisbah* that indicated a royal affiliation. In fact, he worked for no less than three Ayyubid princes, all brothers, his soubriquet 'al-Misri' referring not to Egypt but to his peripatetic attachment to different regional centres and royal encampments (sing. *misr*). He illustrates how some makers of scientific instruments may have enjoyed a closer connection to court circles, especially if they were astrologers, whereas metalworkers in general belonged to a craft that ranked low in status, lower than textile workers, for example. Indeed, it is conspicuous how few of the Mawsili metalworkers in the first half of the thirteenth century signed works for noted patrons. It seems likely that they operated on a market system rather than in a court environment. At almost the same time that al-Siraj al-Dimashqi was inlaying his astrolabe in Damascus, a craftsman who signs himself *al-Ibari* (the needle-maker) al-Isfahani inlaid an astrolabe that prefaces, in its use of larger sheets of silver and, in particular, incised linear detailing, Mosul work of the 1230s and 1240s. Although it is not known where al-Ibari was working, the coincidence of production by a Dimashqi and an Isfahani should caution us against assuming that Mosul somehow enjoyed a

monopoly on inlay work. Muhammad b. Abi Bakr b. Muhammad al-Rashidi al-Ibari al-Isfahani in 618/1221–2: Gunther 1932, vol. I: 118–21, cat. no 5 (where the date is wrongly given as 1223–24); Harari 1938–38: 2518, Pls 1312D, 1312E, 1398; Mayer 1956: 59.

153 Allan (2009: 498, col. 2) suggests that a silver-inlaid bronze Ka'aba key dated 1180 may have been made in Mosul or the Jazira area, as Sourdel-Thomine (1971: 46–51, cat. no 2) proposed.

154 Cf. Kühnel 1939: 8; Ağa-Oğlu 1945: 44. The Khwarazmshahs' invasion into Khurasan in the last quarter of the twelfth century may have destabilised the economy.

155 Cf. Creswell 1952–59, vol. II: 161–70; see Wiet 1963: 206–7.

156 There was an important tradition of silver-inlaid bronze/brass doors in eleventh-century Byzantium, some of which were made in Constantinople, and one of which bears inscriptions in Syriac. Cyril Mango has suggested influence from Syrian Jacobites: see Frazer 1973; Mango 1978: 249–51; Iacobini 2009; Ballian 2009. I am grateful to Cyril and Marlia Mango for their thoughts on the topic. This is not to deny the possibility, however, that well after the establishment of the industry in Mosul Iranian immigrants may have arrived: cf. Ağa-Oğlu 1945: 40.

157 For the wallet, see Robinson 1967; Allan in London 1976a, cat. no 199. The candlestick was subsequently donated in *waqf* to Medina by Mirjan al-Sultani, who is almost certainly Mirjan ibn 'Abdallah ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sultani al-Uljayti, the Ilkhanid vizier connected to Uljaytu, and who is well known for constructing the Mirjaniyyah madrasa in Baghdad in 758/1357: Combe 1931; Ballian 2009; Los Angeles 2011: 67, Fig. 62.

158 Meanwhile, see the important contributions on the subject made by James Allan (Allan 1995a); and Eva Baer 1973–74.

159 Barhebraeus 1932, vol. I: 468. This event occurred, however, shortly before he went to Mosul.

160 See above, n. 100 on al-Turabi, whose *nisbah* suggests he or his family were from Merv. See also Ağa-Oğlu 1945: 40

161 Ettinghausen and Grabar 1987: 364; Ettinghausen, Grabar, Jenkins-Madina 2001: 247: 'Many Mawsili artists worked in styles quite different from those attested by these six pieces, and in the work of one single artist there are stylistic differences that may imply various locales. This pattern reveals how difficult it is to make attributions of metal objects from this period when historical inscriptions are lacking.'

162 For the inscription, see Grabar 1957: 549. On the so-called 'renaissance' among the Syriac communities, see Snelders 2010: 69.

163 Mayer 1959: 13–14; Rice 1953b: 67. The most detailed discussion is Kana'an 2012, where she suggests that Qasim ibn 'Ali's *ghulam* status might indicate that he was manumitted or could have had a contract towards manumission.

164 For instances of metalworkers who called themselves *al-mu'allim* or *ibn al-mu'allim*, see Mayer 1959, passim; Rice 1950a; Rice 1951; Auld 2004; Behrens-Abouseif 1995: 13.

165 Kana'an (2012) discusses the concept of employee and trainee solidarity and pride (*wala'*).

166 British Museum, acc. no 1948 5–8 3, unpublished.

167 Families played an important part in metalworking in Mamluk Damascus: see Ağa-Oğlu 1945: 34–35; Allan 1986: 52.

168 The enigmatic figure holding a crescent moon has been variously been taken to be an emblem of the city of Mosul or of Badr al-Din Lu'lu' himself. If either were to hold true, it would be another indication of affiliation, but more work is needed before we can be certain of its significance, even if none of Rice's five 'shattering revelations' against the emblematic significance of the motif hold true.

IMAGE CREDITS

Fig. 1.1: after Paris 1903, Pls 10, 11, 14a, 14b, 15, 16a, 18, respectively top left to bottom right.
Figs 1.2a–b, 1.3a–i, 1.18b: after Rice 1957a.
Figs 1.2a, 1.8a, 1.10b, 1.12a: Cleveland Museum of Art. inv. no 1956.11 John L. Severance Fund.
Figs 1.4a–b, 1.22 a–b, 1.26: © the Trustees of the British Museum.
Figs 1.4c–d, 1.7 (detail), 1.9a, d, e, h, i, k, 1.10 a, c–g, 1.11, 1.13a–b, 1.14b, 1.16f, 1.24a: photograph Julian Raby.
Figs 1.6, 1.16c, 1.18a: courtesy of the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.
Fig. 1.7 (candlestick): Jean-Gilles Berizzi/Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.
Figs 1.8b, 1.23a, 1.24b, 1.25a–c: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: Purchase, F1941.10.
Figs 1.9b, 1.14a, 1.15b, 1.16a, d: Oliver Watson.
Fig. 1.9c: Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art. Copyright Nour Foundation. Courtesy of the Khalili Family Trust.
Fig. 1.9f: courtesy Staatliches Museum für Volkerkunde, Munich.
Fig. 1.9g: Christie's, London.
Fig. 1.9j: © the Walters Art Museum; photograph Susan Tobin.
Fig. 1.9m: after Rice 1957b.
Figs 1.12b, 1.20a, 1.21b: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.563; photograph Julian Raby.
Figs 1.15a, d, 1.17b, 1.19: after O'Kane 2006.
Fig. 1.15c: after Atıl 1981.
Fig. 1.16b, e: after Wiet 1932.
Fig. 1.17a: Gérard Blot/Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.
Figs 1.20b, 1.21a: after Rice 1953a.
Fig. 1.21c: Christies, London.
Fig. 1.22c–d: after Rice 1953a.
Fig. 1.23b: after Leroy 1964.
Fig. 1.24c: after Leroy 1974–75.
Fig. 1.25d–f: after Sotheby's London 1992.

PART *1*

METALWORK FROM THE IRANIAN WORLD

2

METALWORK AND FOURTEENTH-CENTURY PERSIAN PAINTING: A FOOTNOTE

TERESA FITZHERBERT

The 'classical' style of Persian painting emerged in the last quarter of the fourteenth century but the process underlying its visual codification still remains tantalisingly obscure. Sleuthing is frustrated in particular by the problem of 'the gap' – a lack of securely dated illustrated texts providing evidence of a logical development.[1] Court-quality paintings from the decades between the fall of the Ilkhanids in 1336 and the invasions of Timur in the 1390s survive mainly as cropped images, orphaned of text, either pasted into albums[2] or scattered among the collections of the world. These fragments include some of the most robust and emotionally engaged figure drawings ever to emerge from the Persian repertoire;[3] but it is not these characteristics that become canonised under Timurid patronage in the opening decades of the fifteenth century.[4] In Robert Hillenbrand's words,

> Sadly, later generations of painters gracefully declined that implied challenge and chose to work on a reduced scale, loading more and more visual content into less and less space … And given the beguiling mix of intellectual complexity and visual splendour that marked mature Timurid painting in the following century, who is to say that they were wrong?[5]

Indeed, who are we to stand in judgement, but when, how and why particular stylistic choices were made continues to intrigue. In the absence of a family tree of dated manuscript examples, might a further look at designs on metalwork provide additional insights into what may have occurred in the period of 'the gap'? Both James Allan and Linda Komaroff have thought long and hard about the relationship

of metalwork to painting, and the following is offered merely as a footnote to their scholarship.[6]

Komaroff provides a convincing argument for designs from the Ilkhanid court being disseminated to minor courts and beyond, through drawings on paper and the services of a *naqqash*, providing designs suitable for repetition on a variety of media including metalwork.[7] While this court-generated transmission works well in many instances, such as the candlestick bearing the name of Abu Ishaq Inju,[8] it does not explain why, for example, the slender figure type already well established on metalwork by the early 1300s resembles more closely the British Library's manuscript of three *masnawi*s of Khwaju Kirmani (copied in Baghdad for Sultan Ahmad Jalayir in 740/1396 and with illustrations from around that time)[9] than it does paintings from major manuscript projects associated with the Ilkhanid and Jalayirid courts, such as illustrations to the Edinburgh and London sections of Rashid al-Din's *Jami' al-tawarikh*, c.1314–18;[10] the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, probably from the 1330s;[11] or the captivating creations in the Topkapı and Berlin Albums. For example, compare the enthroned ruler on the Victoria and Albert Museum casket dated by Melikian-Chirvani to c.1300 (Fig. 2.1),[12] with Anushirwan seeking Buzurjmihr's advice from the *Rawzat al-anwar* in the British

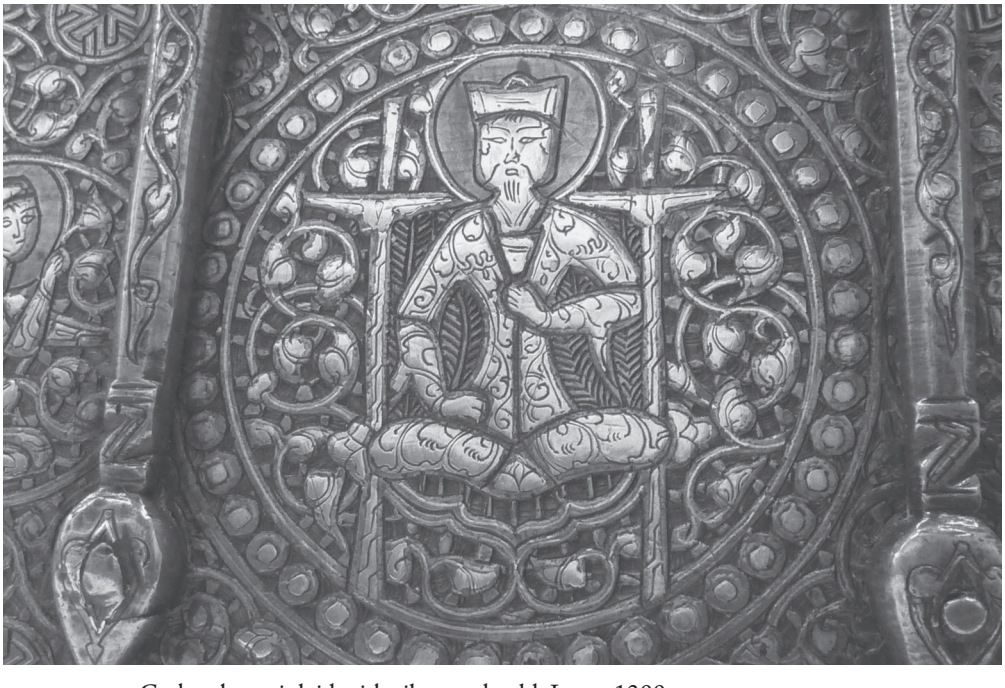

FIG. 2.1 Casket, brass inlaid with silver and gold, Iran c.1300, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no M.710–1910. Photograph © Moya Carey/V&A Images.

Library manuscript (Fig. 2.2), generally agreed to be the earliest surviving example of the mature classical style.

Some manuscripts from the first half of the fourteenth century with no evidence of court patronage, are both closer to contemporary metalwork and lead more logically towards Jalayirid painting in the 1380s and 1390s than do major illustrative cycles from the court. As Allan has pointed out, figures in the illustrated front matter of the *Marzubannama*, copied in Baghdad in 698/1299,[13] are striking for their double outlines as found on inlaid metalwork;[14] and although without the double outlines, this figure style is close to that used thirty years later in the right-hand frontispiece to *al-Ma' al-waraqi wa-al-ard al-najmiyya*, known as *The Allegory of Alchemy*, dated 740/1339.[15] This image, in its turn, shows figures within an architectural setting foreshadowing Anushirwan and Buzurjmihr in their palace, but bearing little relationship to the Great Mongol *Shahnama* of the 1330s, in which disproportionately large figures are set within or before *iwan*s resembling cut-outs for collapsible stage sets.[16]

Rather than struggling to construct a single genealogy for the classical style through the aristocrats of Ilkhanid and Jalayirid manuscripts, and relying heavily on Dust Muhammad's 1540s retrospective reconstruction of a master–pupil continuum,[17]

FIG. 2.2 Anushirwan and Buzurjmihr, three *masnawi*s of Khwaju Kirmani, Baghdad c.1396. Photograph © British Library Board, Add.18113, f.91a.

perhaps it is worth considering if there may have been two distinct, if not wholly unconnected, lines of artistic transmission running in tandem between about 1300 and 1380: namely the more esoteric painterly experiments associated with the court, alongside a style closely tied to a generalised repertoire and the market for metalwork and other crafts. If so, then for reasons as yet unclear – perhaps fashion, commercial pressures, religious questions, or even some kind of atelier coup – the more commercial style of painting came to dominate at court, and was exponentially expanded and enriched to satisfy the demands of bibliophiles among the ruling classes.

By way of an example, take figures of horsemen and horses, including the motif of the horse with the back-turned head. Komaroff suggests that the inlaid brass bowl dated 748/1347–48, in the Musée des Beaux Arts in Lyon (Fig. 2.3),[18] reflects diffusion of designs based on images such as Iskandar fighting the Habbash monster, with raised sword and mounted on a white horse with a back-turned head, in the Great Mongol *Shahnama*.[19] Figures of riders with raised weapons or polo sticks riding horses with heads turned away as if shying are standard on mid-thirteenth-century Jaziran-style metalwork, as in the hunting scenes on the Louvre basin, datable to 1238–40,[20] and on the Freer Gallery of Art's Arenberg basin bearing the name of Sultan Najm al-Din Ayyub;[21] and they continue to appear on metalwork from Iran as well as Iraq

FIG. 2.3 Bowl, brass inlaid with silver and gold, Iran 1347–48, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, inv. no E 542–22. Photograph © Lyon MBA/Photo Alain Basset.

throughout the fourteenth century, as on the Abu Ishaq Inju candlestick. But, whereas the horse with the back-turned head remains conspicuous in a provincial manuscript from the Jazira, occurring in six out of a total of 38 illustrations in the Freer Gallery's copy of Bal'ami's *Tarikhnama*,[22] dated to c.1300,[23] it occurs in only one image among the 58 surviving from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*,[24] despite the many opportunities offered in that manuscript. Horses with heads turned towards the viewer, in a rather comical fashion, are indeed found in *Rashidiyya* illustrations,[25] but these are cloned from fourteenth-century Chinese woodblocks.[26] Thus the diffusion of this particular image seems less dependent on the court than on a continuum at the level of the bazaar.

Horsemen and horses on the Lyon bowl cavort midway between Jaziran metalwork, on the one hand, and the more 'Mannerist' athleticism found in paintings such as those added in the second half of the fourteenth century, to empty spaces for illustrations in the unfinished Persian copy of Rashid al-Din's *Jami' al-tawarikh* with a text date of 717/1317, now in the Topkapı Palace Library (Fig. 2.4).[27] This style of horse and helmet is close to figures on an inlaid brass bowl in the Victoria and Albert Museum, undated but identified by Komaroff as including the titles of the Jalayirid Sultan Uways (r.757–76/1356–74). As Komaroff also notes, there is substantial similarity between the bowl's figure types and those in the Khwaju Kirmani manuscript paintings.[28]

FIG. 2.4 *Jami' al-tawarikh* of Rashid al-Din, text dated 717/1317, painting second half of the fourteenth century, Topkapı Palace Library, H.1654, f.184b. Photograph © Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.

Although we do not know precisely when or where the paintings were added to the Persian *Jami' al-tawarikh* text, the style and dating of the V&A bowl suggests it may have been close in time and place to the most spectacular of the album folios of 'the gap'.[29] The thought that two such contrasting styles may both have been in use, side by side, in the Jalayirid atelier, cogently raises the question of when the more multi-media style began to be upgraded for illustrating even the grandest books.

In the course of the second half of the fourteenth century, a change occurs in both the preferred subject matter selected for decorating metalwork and texts selected for illustration. On metalwork, this is expressed particularly in scenes of Sufi gatherings, with a *pir* and his *murid*s replacing the traditional ruler and attendants, as on the bowl now in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha (Fig. 2.5).[30] In illustrated texts, the taste for epics gives way to lyric poetry, particularly the *masnawi*s of Nizami (Fig. 2.6),[31] and also those of Khwaju Kirmani (Fig. 2.2).

By the reign of Sultan Ahmad Jalayir (r.782–813/1382–1410), the styles of bazaar and court appear to be converging to create a new mode, in which differences between court and non-court become largely ones of quality rather than style or substance. The British Library's copy of the *Khamsa* of Nizami states that it was copied in Baghdad between 788 and 790/1386 and 1388, by the scribe Mahmud ibn Muhammad *al-katib*. The words *al-sultani* follow, but they have been subsequently scratched out; this suggests at least an erstwhile connection with the court of Sultan Ahmad. The

FIG. 2.5 Bowl, brass inlaid with silver and gold, fourteenth century, Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, inv. no MW.481.2007. Photograph © Oliver Watson.

style that emerges combines some of the developments known from the paintings of 'the gap', such as advances towards full-page composition and more complex ways of integrating architecture and landscape into columns of verse (Fig. 2.6), but the delicate, static figures remain closer to metalwork, and display a radically reduced range of animation and emotional expression compared with the most complex of the album folios. A similar process can also be seen in the treatment of pseudo-scientific texts such as the Bibliothèque Nationale's *'Aja'ib-nama* of Tusi Salmani, copied by Ahmad Harawi in 790/1388, which specifically states that it was made for the *kitabkhana* of Sultan Ahmad Khan.[32]

If the Khwaju Kirmani manuscript is taken as the benchmark for the advent of the mature classical style of painting at the court of Sultan Ahmad around 1396, then it seems it may be a hybrid of court and bazaar traditions, with the bazaar, if anything, playing the stronger hand – but why? Exploring a change in aesthetics, underlying commercial pressures or possible religious dimensions are all too weighty for this 'footnote'; but here's a shot at a conspiracy theory.

In 1544 we hear from Dust Muhammad that the most famous painter in Sultan Uways's atelier, Shams al-Din – whose name was later added to many of the most awesome of the album paintings – worked for no other master after the Sultan's death

FIG. 2.6 Khusrau before Shirin's Palace, *Khamsa* of Nizami, Baghdad 1386–88. Photograph © British Library Board, Or.13297, f.80a.

in 1374. Could this be a 'veiled' reference to an atelier coup in which the great master, whose works were seeking to portray glimpses into men's souls as never before, was ousted?[33] The design repertoire of workshop and bazaar, easily adapted to suit diverse purposes and surfaces, posed no such threat. Perhaps Orhan Pamuk should be asked to write the history of 'the gap'.

NOTES

1 This 'footnote' is offered in gratitude to James Allan, who, as inspirational teacher and unfailingly generous scholar, has always found time to listen to ideas – even the less plausible.

2 Most notably those now in the Topkapı Palace Library, H.2152, 2153, 2154 and 2160; Istanbul University Library, F.1422; and the Diez Albums, now in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung, Diez A. fols 70–74.

3 For example, probably from the 1360s and 1370s, illustrations from a dispersed copy of Firdausi's *Shahnama*, in the Album H.2153, ff.23a, 65b, 157a and 73b, illustrated in Rogers, Çağman and Tanandı 1986: 71, ills 50–54; and the fragmentary *Kalila wa Dimna* cycle, now in Istanbul University Library, Album F.1422, for which see in particular the anthropomorphised animals in O'Kane 2003: 111, Pl. 19 and 145, Pl. 43.

4 For questions surrounding the dating of the paintings in this manuscript see Brend 2003: 38 and 58–59 n. 10; Adamova 2008: 30–43; Brend 2009: 86–92 and nn. 56, 61 and 62.

5 Hillenbrand 2002: 167.

6 See particularly Allan 1995a: 67–75; Allan 2002: 35–39; Komaroff 1994: 2–34; 2002: 168–95.

7 Komaroff 1994: 13–21; 2002: 185–95.

8 Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, MW.122.1999, probably made in Shiraz during Abu Ishaq's reign, 742–54/1341–53, Komaroff 1994: 187–91 and Fig. 224. For the fullest discussion of this object and superb illustrations see Allan 2002: 34–39. Adamova 2008: 31 also accepts a purely courtly genealogy for the classical style.

9 British Library, Add.18113, f.92a; for questions surrounding the precise dating of the paintings in this manuscript, see Adamova 2008: 37–38.

10 Blair 1995.

11 In order to comply with the illustration quota, paintings from the *Jami' al-tawarikh* and Great Mongol *Shahnama*, that are fully published elsewhere, have not been included here; see Talbot Rice 1976; Blair 1995 and Grabar and Blair 1980.

12 Brass casket inlaid with silver and gold, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no M.710–1910; Melikian-Chirvani 1982: 195–97, no 89, Figs 89A–C; although undated, Melikian-Chirvani dates this casket to the early fourteenth century, remarking on the

unusually sinicised facial type of the enthroned ruler, with sinuous moustache, slanting eyes and sparse beard. To this may be added the Mongol 'tuft', or small fringe at the centre of the forehead, which occurs in paintings around the year 1300 but not in or after the Rashidiyya manuscripts illustrated in the second decade of the fourteenth century.

13 Simpson 1982: 91–116 and Fig. 51; Komaroff 2002: 172–73 and Fig. 200.

14 Allan 1995a: 73 and Fig. 7.

15 Carboni 2002: 222–25 and Fig. 271; Berlekamp 2003: 35–59, who states that the whole manuscript, text and paintings, were produced at approximately the same time.

16 See, for example, Grabar and Blair 1980: 85, no 14, Shah Zav, son of Tahmasp, enthroned, formerly Vever Collection, now Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC, S86.0107.

17 Thackston 1979: 345–46; Roxburgh 2000: 160–208.

18 Musée des Beaux Arts in Lyon, inv. no E542–22.

19 Komaroff 2002: 193–94, Figs 231 and 234.

20 Musée du Louvre, inv. no 5991; Rice 1957: 301–11 and Figs 28 and 29.

21 Ruler of Diyarbakir 1232–39, Damascus 1239 and 1245–49, and Egypt 1240–49; inv. no F1955.10; see Atıl 1986: 137–47, no 18, especially ills pp.137 and 140.

22 Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, MS F.1957.16, f.116a.

23 Fitzherbert 2001, vol. I: 332–34 and 357–73; vol. II: Pls 10, 16, 20, 23, 36, 38.

24 Blair 1989: 125–31, in particular 126.

25 For example see Blair 1995 fol. 168a, Fig. 17.

26 Saito 1967: 25–40, 59–70; Fitzherbert 2001, vol. II, Figs 105a–b.

27 Topkapı Palace Library, H.1654; Blair 1995: 28; Inal 1963: 163–75, who provides a useful description of the manuscript but discusses only the Rashidiyya-style paintings.

28 Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no 1372–1874; Komaroff 1994: 25, Figs 20 and 33, n. 59.

29 See n. 3 above.

30 Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, inv. no MW.481.2007; for a discussion of this object see Allan 1999: 106–9, no 24. Naturally, Sufi and royal interests were not mutually exclusive; Uways Jalayir (r.757–776/1356–82) was commonly referred to as Shaykh Uways.

31 British Library, *Khamsa* of Nizami, Khusrau before Shirin's Palace, Or.13297, f.80a, Titley 1971: 8–11.

32 Richard 1997: 71, no 33.

33 Thackston 1979: 345; for example, see Rogers, Çağman and Tanındı 1986: 71, and ill. 53, in which Isfandiyar is depicted kneeling before the dying dragon, with eyes closed as if in meditation, while his companion stands with hands crossed over his breast, in the stance of an attendant angel.

3

THE DIE-ENGRAVER OF BALKH (290/902–302/914)

LUKE TREADWELL

INTRODUCTION: SIGNED DIES OF THE THIRD AND FOURTH CENTURIES AH

One of the pleasures of studying Iranian precious-metal coins of the fourth century AH lies in the fact that this is the only series of Islamic coinage that offers a glimpse into the world of the craftsmen who made the dies from which the coins were struck. On the whole Islamic numismatics naturally lends itself to the study of the elite social strata that commissioned and used coinage.[1] High politics, religious, social and cultural identity and the dynamics of commercial exchange are the areas in which Islamic coins have traditionally made their contribution to the historical record. By contrast very little has been written about the making of coinage, for the obvious reasons that historians were largely uninterested in the operation of mints and no mint records survive (before the early-modern age), which might compensate for their indifference. The coin inscriptions, though full of information about the rulers who commissioned them and the location and date of striking, are silent about the men who made these objects: the engravers who sank the dies and the workers who operated the mints. The sole exception to this rule known to me occurs in the gold and silver coinage of the Samanid and Buyid states which dominated the region of greater Iran after the unitary caliphal state had collapsed. Some of these coins bear marks in the form of signatures which were placed on the die by their engravers. These signatures allow us to identify the engravers and to assemble multiple specimens of their work. In other cases, the hand of an individual engraver can be discerned through stylistic analysis

which reveals features – such as varying levels of technical ability and the occurrence of particular letter forms and ornaments – that can be linked to the output of a single craftsman.[2] In the text that follows, I will make frequent reference to such dies, although readers will be aware that the objects to which I refer are not in fact the dies themselves, which were destroyed by the mintmaster at the end of every calendar year to prevent their illegal use, but the coins which bear their impressions.

When the Samanids and Buyids began striking their own silver coinage in the late third and early fourth century, they faced a shortage of skilled labour. In the Abbasid state, dies had been engraved in central workshops located in the caliphal capital, from where they were distributed to provincial mints. The centralised manufacture of dies was a key element in the caliph's strategy to regulate the coinage of his realm, because it allowed him to monitor what was inscribed on the coins and to determine how much coinage was produced. The system was invented in the early third century, as part of the caliph al-Ma'mun's (d.218/833) monetary reform.[3] Although it does not appear to have worked very efficiently, the system did at least succeed in maintaining control of the coinage of the core regions of the state – Iraq and western and central Iran – throughout the century.[4] By the middle of the third century, locally manufactured dies began to be used to produce silver coinage in remote regions, like Tukharistan in eastern Iran, and in the mints of some of the early Iranian successor dynasties like the Saffarids, who made formal acknowledgement of caliphal authority, but acted as independent sovereigns in all matters of state, including the production of coinage. The emergence of the Samanids and Buyids greatly accelerated the trend towards the local manufacture of dies and precipitated the demise of the caliphal die workshops. Both dynasties seem to have inaugurated their own coinages unilaterally, the Samanids in 279/892 and the Buyids in 322/933, without seeking the permission of the increasingly powerless caliph. As had been the case with the Saffarids, the caliphal title continued to be engraved on their coins, but the caliphal administration played no practical role in the production of dies or the administration of the mint network.

When they began striking coins the successor states resorted to different strategies in order to make up for the absence of a regional tradition of dirham die-engraving. In Samarqand, local engravers who were experienced in the manufacture of dies for copper coins were employed to make dirham dies, while in the nearby mint of al-Shash, officials drafted in craftsmen who evidently had no previous experience of manufacturing dies.[5] In the early years of Buyid minting in the Jibal province of northern Iran (from 335/946), the mintmasters called on the expertise of a local engraver, Hasan b. Muhammad, who had probably learned his trade in the metalworking quarters of al-Muhammadiyya. The numismatic record shows that when Hasan left the bazaar to work in the mint, he started placing minuscule signatures on his dies.[6] Though it was accepted practice in commercial

metalworking workshops, signing was certainly not permitted in the mint. Caliphal coins were regarded as documents of state that conveyed the power and prestige of the ruler, and the strictly regulated environment of the centralised workshop had prohibited the placing of any marks on the die which would detract from the solemnity of the caliphal presence. Yet under the Iranian successor states, mint procedures were not as strictly enforced as they had been in Iraq. Practices that had previously been forbidden, such as die-signing, though not encouraged, were tolerated in some smaller mints. Hasan b. Muhammad's die corpus can be reconstructed from the evidence of surviving coins which bear the impression of more than two dozen dies signed by him. Yet it is obvious that his signing practice was not universally accepted. Towards the end of his working life, the signature which he had inscribed on a die which he made for the mint of al-Muhammadiyya was deliberately erased from the die by the mint authorities.[7]

Hasan was one of two signing engravers whose die corpus can be reconstructed from such signatures. The other, (al-)Harith (b. Bakr?), who also used the pseudonym 'Mujib', was active in the Samanid mints of Tukharistan and Khurasan between 293/905 and the late 330s/940s.[8] While these are the two main signing engravers known from the fourth century, dies made by some other non-signing engravers can be identified by means of stylistic analysis. Some of these engravers were ordinary craftsmen of unexceptional talent: their dies, while adequate for the purposes of striking coins, were not particularly well made. But one engraver does stands out as a craftsman of real ability, who not only worked to the highest standards of accuracy, but exploited the relative freedom he found in the Samanid mint of Balkh to experiment with new forms of ornamentation and different styles of script. In the course of his short career in Balkh (290/902–302/914) he produced some of the most attractive dies made in the early Islamic period.

THE COINAGE OF TUKHARISTAN IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE THIRD CENTURY

As noted above, Tukharistan was one of the first regions in the caliphate to begin using locally manufactured dies. From the 260s/870s onwards, local amirs from the Banijurid and Saffarid dynasties began producing coins in the mint of Andaraba that were quite distinct from the contemporary coinage of the caliphate. They were struck on small, thick flans from crudely engraved dies whose local origin was betrayed by frequent mistakes in spelling as well as poorly formed letters. Although mints operated sporadically in both Balkh, the regional capital, and the mining community of Panjhir, Andaraba was the only consistently productive mint in the region during the second

half of the third century; it was there that the huge silver deposits of the Panjhir mines were brought to be turned into dirhams.[9]

In 287/900 the Samanid amir Isma'il b. Ahmad (d.295/907) defeated his Saffarid rival, 'Amr b. Layth and seized control of the Saffarid provinces of Khurasan and Tukharistan. In the early years of Samanid rule, Andaraba continued to strike dirhams from dies made by the resident engravers. But within a couple of years, the Samanid governors decided to expand the local mint network and to improve the style of the crude local dirhams, to bring them up the standard of the metropolitan mints of Samarqand and al-Shash. To this end they opened the dormant mints of Balkh (in 290/902) and Panjhir (in 293/905) and replaced the Andaraba engraver with a more competent craftsman. It was in this period that Mujib (a.k.a. al-Harith) began signing the dies that he made for the remote mints of the Panjhir mining region, which lay far beyond the reach of the central authorities. Balkh, the city in which our anonymous craftsman worked, was the regional capital, a conurbation of great antiquity and a wealthy trading centre, with a long history of dirham mintage under the Abbasids in the late second and early third centuries. It is no surprise, then, that we find that the Balkh engraver did not sign his dies. Although his dies show him to have been a superior craftsman to Mujib, the mint authorities for whom he worked would not have tolerated such aberrant practices in their mint.

THE BALKH ENGRAVER AS SOLE PROVIDER OF DIES FOR THE MINT (290/902–302/914)

Given the absence of signed dies from Balkh, how can we be confident that all the dies which were produced between these dates were made by one craftsman rather than by many? I will argue that two factors – exceptional technical ability and a consistent repertoire of new ornaments and stylistic flourishes seen on the Balkh coins throughout the 290s – suggest that only one engraver was active in the mint. Another point which supports the 'single engraver' theory is that the Balkh mint does not seem to have used very high quantities of dies from one year to the next. The fairly modest estimated totals for annual die consumption (see Fig. 3.1) suggest that the mint authorities would not have needed to employ more than one engraver per year.[10]

Although this does not amount to a conclusive argument – several engravers could theoretically have been employed to make very small numbers of dies – when the statistical data for die consumption is considered alongside the arguments for stylistic coherence and technical competence, the case for a single engraver becomes compelling.

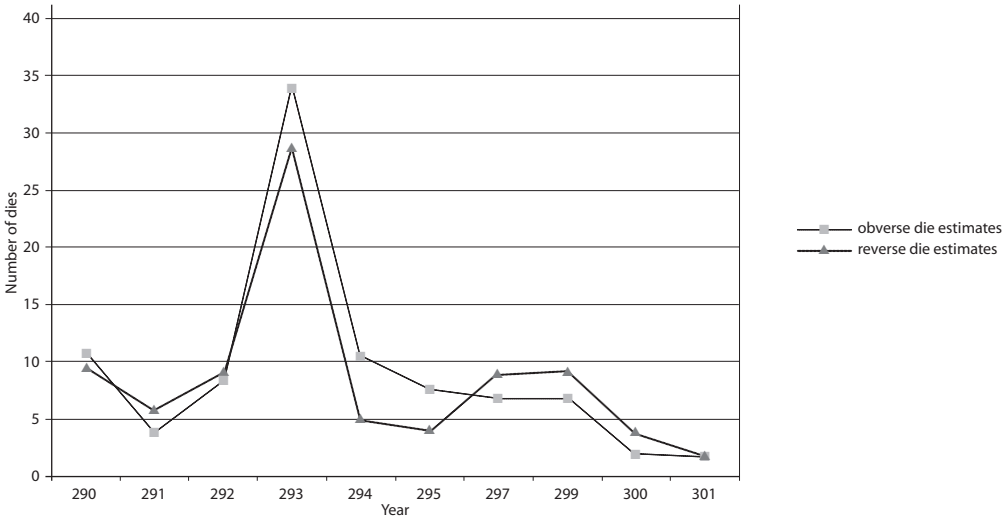

FIG. 3.1 Estimated number of dirham dies made in Balkh.

ACCURACY AND INNOVATION IN THE BALKH DIES

When the Balkh engraver made his first die in 290, the only local mint in operation was Andaraba. It was these local dirhams which he took as the model for his own work. His first dies adopted the characteristic outline of the combined letters *lam alif* on the obverse of the Andaraba coin (Fig. 3.2a) but recast it in a more elegant fashion.[11] The obverse of the Balkh 291 dirham (Fig. 3.2c and Fig. 3.3/1a) shows that while he retained the parallel stems of the *lam alif*, he substituted sharply pointed serifs for the circular terminals of the original and detached the parallel uprights from their triangular bases, placing them instead upon a flat platform, and creating in the process a crisp form in the shape of an architectonic column topped and tailed with a capital and base. These little columns, in addition to other serifs added to letters with vertical extensions such as the *dal* and *ha* at the end of the second line, and the *kaf* and *lam* at the end of third, give a unitary structure to the whole field that is wholly lacking in the model. The outward-facing serifs which crown each group of letters at either end of the lines provide a cushion that appears to support the line above, much as a column capital supports a beam which spans a ceiling. To this compact construction, our engraver added ornament in the form of a large leaf-shaped fleuron suspended above the centre of the top line. This device appears to be poised to fall downwards towards the open mouth of a receptacle which he placed in the middle of the third line, formed by an arabesque in the shape of a 'w' that has been created by enlarging and extending the *ra*

and *ya* of the word *sharik*. The final detail – one might call it the cherry at the bottom of the cake – consists of a loop, formed by the tail of the letter *kha* of the mint-name *balkh*, which intrudes upwards from the margin into the lowest segment of the field, where it nestles primly just underneath the two lower loops of the descending stems of the arabesque. The whole field is enclosed by the standard double marginal inscription that is also found on the Andaraba model, but is here rendered in a plain serifless script of exceptional clarity, which ensures easy legibility.

The reverse of the coin also shows that the Balkh engraver took his cue from the Andaraba prototype but made a much better die than the original (see Fig. 3.2b and d and Fig. 3.3/1b). The double circle with double annulets at the four points of the compass is taken over from the original, as is the elaborate form of the caliph's title *al-muktafi billah* (d.295/907). On the Andaraba coin, the caliphal title is picked out by the long backward-facing tail of the *ya* of *muktafi*, which is extended from the end of the word all the way back to its first letter, creating an underscoring that draws the eye to the phrase. This device is incorporated wholesale into the Balkh coin. In other respects, however, the Balkh die improves on its Andaraba parent: serifs are introduced on the upright terminals of letters, as is multiple plaiting or braiding in the *dal* of *muhammad*. In the last line of the field inscription, the engraver seems to have overreached himself in an attempt to create a duplicate of the arabesque 'w' which is located in the corresponding location on the obverse die. His intention appears to have been to create a device which also works as a mirror image that is divided on its central axis, like the form of the phrase *la sharika lahu*, in which each half is composed of an upright on the outside that flanks a lower block of letters on the inside, which in turn flanks the central arabesque. To achieve the same effect on the reverse the engraver has bent backwards the two letters which descend below the baseline – the *lam* of *isma'il*

a b c d

FIG. 3.2 a–b Dirham of Andaraba 290 (after Schwarz 2002, no 71; c–d Dirham of Balkh 291 (Zeno Oriental Coins website, no 47057, collection of Ralph Cannito (see also Fig.3.3/1a–b).

a b

1 obverse and reverse of Balkh 291 (Zeno 47057).

a b

2 obverse and reverse of Balkh 292 (i) (Zeno 62641).

a b

3 obverse and reverse of Balkh 292 (ii) (after Schwarz 2002, no 551).

FIG. 3.3 Enlarged images of dirhams from the Balkh engraver's dies (291–92).

and the *nun* of *ibn* – and curled their respective terminals into loops. At a distance these lowered stems, flanked by the ascending uprights of the two letters – the *ya* of *isma'il* and the *alif* of *ahmad* – do resemble the arabesque of the obverse. But to create this form, the engraver has contorted some letters, particularly the *lam* and *ya*, but also the *nun*, into shapes that would be unrecognisable if they were seen out of context. The tension between form and sense is greater here than it is in the analogous, but simpler, device on the obverse.

This description of an early die pair suggests to us that the Balkh engraver was concerned not only with legibility and elegance of form, but also with balance and proportionality. The two sides of this tiny object – which has a diameter of no more than 28mm – have been put together with such care and attention to detail that when enlarged, as in Fig. 3.3/1a–b, they resemble an architectural motif, such as a medallion that might be placed in the spandrel of an arch, as much as they do a coin. The engraver has marshalled the uneven contents of the field inscription into a pleasing pictogram which fills the central space and is pegged to the outer rim by the ornamental devices that link the field to the margin.

In the dies of 292/904 the engraver introduces further modifications. In 292 (i) (see Fig. 3.3/2a–b) he uses a narrow-bladed engraving tool (or burin) to create a thinner ductus of script, simplifies the obverse fleuron by removing its outer casing, substitutes crossed-stemmed *lam alif*s for the parallel stems of the previous year, and reduces the total area occupied by the field inscription, allowing more empty space around the text block. This results in a condensed but less crowded and thus more easily legible text block. On the reverse he introduces the mint-name *balkh* in the form of a pendant which hangs down, like a fruit, from the middle of the amir's name on the bottom line. In the die pair 292 (ii) (see Fig. 3.3/3a–b) he was instructed to include the name of the local Banijurid amir, Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Ahmad, as well as that of the Samanid sovereign. Once again he looked to the earlier coinage of Andaraba (see Fig. 3.2a) for guidance and adopted the solution which he found there. The requirement to cite three generations of the amiral family had forced the Andaraba engraver to use a cursive or rounded script instead of the standard rectilinear script.[12] This allowed him to nest one letter within another, and to create a second (lower) level at which letters could be placed on the die. Both expedients were used to fit the unusually long inscription (16 letters) into a single line. The Balkh engraver followed suit. He shifted the third line of the field inscription deftly upwards and transformed the dot which had lain under it in 292 (i) into a loop that formed the *mim* of *muhammad*, the amir's father, thus linking the new line to those above. On the reverse of 292 (ii), he added some refinements: the annulets within the double circle were replaced by cabling that locks together the inner and outer circles and the caliph's title was modified in order to highlight its two (roughly) equal

halves. This was achieved by the addition of two groups of two adjacent half circles that punctuate either end of the backward-facing tail of the *ya* that lies underneath the phrase and serve to emphasise the mirror-image effect of the whole device. In so doing, the engraver succeeds in forming an equivalent form to the third line of the obverse. He also modifies the central arabesque in the last line of the reverse, by returning the descending stems of the *lam* and the *nun* to the vertical and forming a 'w' shape which, although not as perfectly formed, does resemble the basic shape of the arabesque on the obverse.

As for the use of a rounded script for the longer inscription that contains the name of the local amir, a further point arises when we look at a couple of later dies of his, both dated to the year 297/909 (see Fig. 3.4/1 and 2). In this year, our engraver was instructed to put the name of another local amir, *ahmad b. muhammad b. yahya*, on his coins. As may be seen from the comparison of 297 (i), on which he inscribed the name in standard rectilinear form, to 297 (ii), on which he used a rounded script, the latter serves to highlight each of the three names and increase their legibility. In 297 (i) by contrast, the use of the rectilinear inscription not only takes up more space on the die than the lines above, but also makes the names of the amirs difficult to distinguish from one another. This clarifying effect of the use of the rounded script is no doubt one reason why it was occasionally adopted for the name of the amirs in other mints than Balkh, as we shall see below.

The coin of 297 (ii) (Fig. 3.4/2a–b) shows that our engraver still retained his appetite for innovation at the end of the decade. Since the bottom line containing the names of the amirs was still longer than the three lines above it (in spite of the use of rounded script), he reduced the three lines containing the credal statement to two, both equal in length to the final line, and thus created a neat rectangular text block which he topped with a large fleuron. Meanwhile the reverse field was modified to match, by the reduction of the first three lines to two. These were followed by a third line which bore the title of the Samanid amir, Ahmad b. Isma'il, that was also rendered in rounded script, and modelled in such a way, with lowered *mim*s in the words *ahmad* and *isma'il*, and a long floriated tail to the *nun* of *ibn*, to mirror the outline shape of the final line of the obverse. Once again, we note his attempt to create an equivalent shape in the text blocks of both sides of the coin.

These later coins, and the last one illustrated in Fig. 3.4, dated 299/911 (see Fig. 3.4/3a–b) are less heavily seriffed than the earlier ones. Their plain script reflects the letter forms of the Samanid dirhams which were produced in the mint of Andaraba from 302/914 onwards (see Fig. 3.5a–b), suggesting that our engraver was adapting his style to match that of the new local currency. Nevertheless, the dirham of 299/911 shows that he retained some of the exuberant flourishes that he had introduced in earlier years. The plaiting of the *sad* of the (name of the local amir) *abu nasr* on the obverse and

a

b

1 obverse and reverse of Balkh 297 (i) (Zeno 68807).

a

b

2 obverse and reverse of Balkh 297 (ii) (after Schwarz 2002, no 555).

a

b

3 obverse and reverse of Balkh 299 (Zeno 68809).

FIG. 3.4 Enlarged images of dirhams from the Balkh engraver's dies (297–99).

a b

FIG. 3.5 a–b Dirham of Andaraba 303/915 (after Schwarz 2002, no 109).

the *dal* of *muhammad* on the reverse, as well as the reintroduction of the mint name at the bottom of the reverse field are evidence of this. He also adjusted the layout of the field inscriptions to accommodate the shorter final line (*abu nasr*), reintroducing four lines of inscription to both sides of the coin in place of the three that are seen on the dirham of 297/909.

Two years after he had made the dies of 299/911, the mint organisation of Tukharistan changed out of all recognition. The period of experimentation in design which we have described above was brought to an end in 302/914, when a standard, plain die style, with a small central field and annulets in the outer margin, was introduced for all the mints of the region (see Fig. 3.5a–b).

These dies were probably manufactured in a single location, either in Balkh or Andaraba, from where they were distributed for use in neighbouring mints. While the six die pairs presented above give a sense of the talent and creativity which the Balkh engraver brought to his work, they do not reflect his whole corpus. This task could only be accomplished by examining the material of the Swedish Viking-Age silver hoards, which contain a high concentration of his dies. But even the small sample examined here gives us a good impression of the exceptional qualities that he brought to the business of die-engraving.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BALKH ENGRAVER'S WORK

The Balkh dies were a novelty not just for Tukharistan, but for the successor state coinage as a whole. Very few dies show a similar attention to detail or a concern for the visual appeal of both sides of the coin. The dirhams of Samarqand and al-Shash dating to the 280s/890s, though legible and well produced, were workaday and unpretentious in style, entirely lacking in the flourishes which our engraver lavished on his tiny dies.[13]

The Andaraba engraver(s) who provided the prototype for our engraver did experiment with some ornamental devices, such as ornate forms of the caliphal title (see Fig. 3.2b) and the leaf-shaped letter terminals which appear briefly in the 280s, but he went no further than this and was not a particularly competent engraver to boot.[14] Our engraver brought several new elements to his dies: he introduced cabling or plaiting to letter forms (*dal* and *sad*) and circular frames around the field and made consistent use of fleurons and other ornamental devices. Above all, he distinguished himself by his concern with the coin face not just as a collection of words, but as an image. His use of the arabesque, his liking for mirror-image devices and his interest in creating equivalent forms on obverse and reverse, all mark him out as an exceptional craftsman.

Where did our engraver learn to incise metalware before he began working in the mint? That he was an experienced metalworker by 290/902 cannot be doubted, but his professional formation is a mystery. Involvement in some other branch of metalworking is the most likely background for a person who displayed his set of skills, perhaps as an engraver of fine silverware or high-tin bronzeware. Some of the ornamental devices he introduced to his dies can be found on the precious metalware that has been attributed to eastern Iran in the ninth and tenth centuries.[15] But the evident ease with which he worked on the tiny surface of the dirham dies suggests an earlier familiarity with miniature work, such as might be required for gem-cutting and engraving. Too little is known about the different technologies involved in metal- and stone-engraving for us to guess where he might have started his career.[16]

Once the Balkh engraver had begun making dies, his ideas quickly spread to neighbouring mints in Tukharistan and back into the mints of the Samanid homeland in Transoxania. The ornate *sharik* with its central fleuron that usually occurs in the third line of the obverse reappears on an early die of Ma'din (Panjhir) made by Mujib in 293, as well as on some of the dinar dies which Mujib, under the name of Harith, made twenty years later for the Nishapur mint (see Fig. 3.6).

FIG. 3.6 a–b Dirham of Ma'din 293 (after Schwarz 1995, no 68); c–d Dinar of Nishapur 313 (collection of Hans Lundberg, Stockholm).

In 294 the rounded script was first used for the name of a Samanid amir on a dirham of Samarqand, while in the following year in the same mint, the tail of the *nun* of the word *mi'atayn* which hangs down from the obverse margin is formed in the shape of a leaf, a decorative feature also found on the Balkh coinage.[17] Although the Balkh engraver's exuberant flourishes found ready imitators on both sides of the Oxus River, the fashion did not endure for long. Sobriety soon returned to most issues of dirham mints other than Balkh, no doubt because the mintmasters valued conformity above creativity. The use of rounded script for the name of the amir did not survive into the fourth century, and although rounded script did make a brief spectacular reappearance in the coins of late-fourth-century Buyid Shiraz, it was not until the Ayyubid period that it became the norm for numismatic inscriptions.[18] The work of the Balkh engraver represents a rare interlude in the successor state coinage of Iran during which the traditional conservatism of coinage design was challenged unopposed by a craftsman who applied his full energies to the business of die-making.

APPENDIX

Year	Sample	Obverse dies observed	Reverse dies observed	Obverse singletons	Reverse singletons	Estimates for obverse dies	Estimates for reverse dies
290	27	8	7	3	3	10.7	9.6
291	14	3	4	1	2	3.8	5.8
292	78	7	8	2	2	8.2	9.2
293	115	29	25	6	5	33.8	28.8
294	8	5	4	3	1	10.4	5.1
295	10	5	3	2	1	7.5	3.9
297	22	6	7	1	2	6.8	8.8
299	17	5	6	2	3	6.8	9.1
300	16	2	3	0	1	2.0	3.7
301	7	1	1	1	1	1.8	1.8

TABLE 3.1 Raw data for annual estimates of dies used in the mint of Balkh.

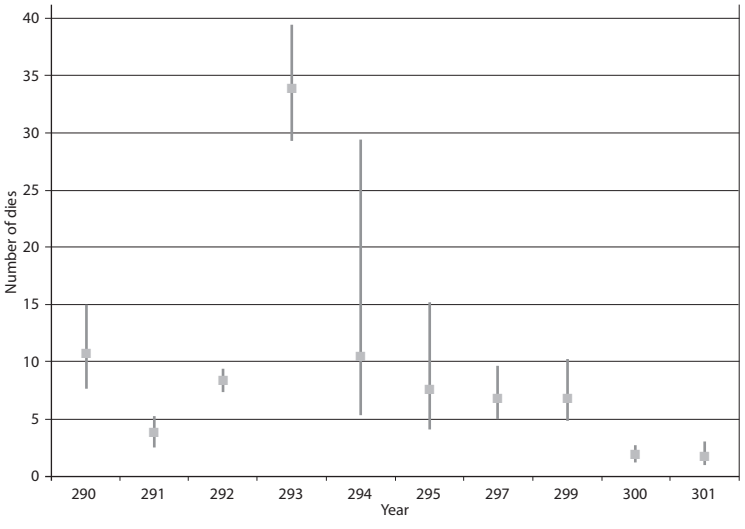

TABLE 3.2 Ninety-five per cent confidence intervals for the number of obverse dirham dies made in Balkh.

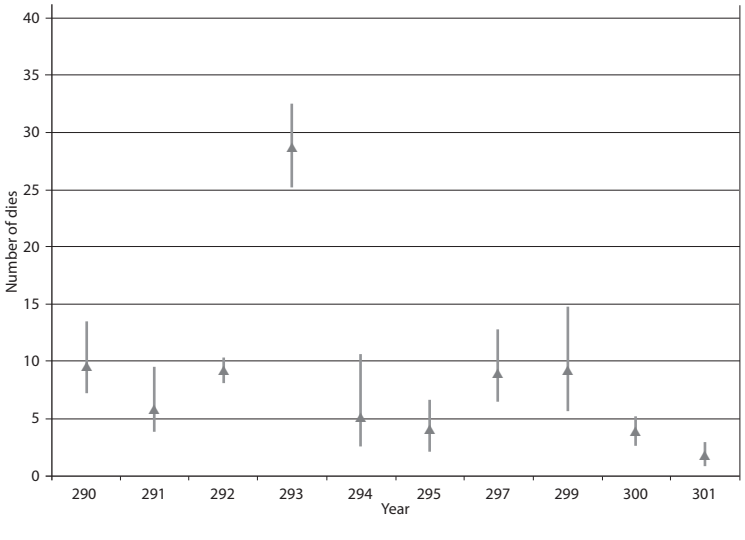

TABLE 3.3 Ninety-five per cent confidence intervals for the number of reverse dirham dies made in Balkh.

NOTES

1 I offer this short study as a tribute to James Allan, who has made such significant contributions to research in Islamic metalware and who will be remembered as a much valued colleague and friend by all who have had the pleasure of working with him.

2 For a recent study which examines the evidence for signing engravers who worked in mints of the Samanid, Buyid and Kakwayhid states, see Treadwell 2011.

3 For Ma'mun's reforms, see El-Hibri 1993.

4 For evidence of the limited effectiveness of the centralised distribution of dies see Ilisch 1979 and 2007.

5 See Treadwell 2011 (Ch. 4).

6 See Treadwell 2011 (Ch. 6).

7 See Bier 1979.

8 See Treadwell 2011 (Chs 4 and 5).

9 For the most comprehensive illustrated catalogues of the Banijurid and Samanid dirhams of Tukharistan, see Schwarz 1995 and 2002.

10 The numismatic records from which I compiled the raw statistical data used to calculate the annual estimates of dies consumed by the mint were given to me in the form of an unpublished spreadsheet by my colleague Gert Rispling. I am very grateful indeed to Gert for his permission to make use of his material: only numismatists will appreciate the full extent of the painstaking labours which lie behind its compilation. The mathematical formula used to generate the estimates in the graph was devised by Warren Esty (see Esty 2006 and Treadwell 2011, Appendix 1, for detailed comments on the application of Esty's formula). The reliability of the whole-number estimates of die usage shown in the graph has been determined by generating 95 per cent confidence intervals for those estimates. The upper and lower ends of the 95 per cent confidence intervals – that is the highest and lowest likely number of dies – were calculated using the formulae devised in Esty 2006: 360. These confidence intervals suggest that the estimated totals are reasonably reliable indicators of total die usage. For the raw data and the confidence intervals see the appendix at the end of this essay.

11 Since I have been unable to acquire an image of a dirham of Balkh dated 290, I have illustrated a dirham of the following year of virtually identical appearance (compare Fig. 3.2c–d with Balkh 290 in Schwarz 2002: no 550). The first three lines on the obverse of the Andaraba and Balkh dirhams read: *la ilaha illa / allah wahdahu / la sharika lahu*; the first three lines on the reverse read: *[lillah] muhammad / rasul allah / al-muktafi billah*.

12 This early numismatic use of rounded script was noted by Blair 1998: 16.

13 See the dirhams of Samarqand and al-Shash in Fedorov 2008 et al.: nos 697–714 and Mayer 1998: nos 217–33.

14 Note the leaf shape in the terminal of the *nun* of *mi'atayn* on the dirham of Andaraba 283 (Z13983, from www.zeno.ru): the floral terminal of the *'ayn* of *arba'a* on the dirham

of Andaraba 284 (Z33455); the flower in the *sharik* of Andaraba 290 (Schwarz 2002: no 74); and the fleuron above the obverse of Andaraba 291 (Schwarz 2002: no 76).

15 See for example the famous octagonal silver gilt dish in the Berlin museum (*Les Perses sassanides* 2006: 133, no 76). Originally thought to be Sasanian, this finely-worked silver platter has recently been redated to the early Islamic period. The cabled links in the reverse circle of the Balkh reverse die of 292 (ii) (see Fig. 3.3/3b) resemble the interlocking loops on the strapwork that divides the nine medallions on the dish. The four lotus buds which are found in the spaces between the four senmurvs on the dish are not dissimilar to the fleurons on the Balkh dirhams.

16 Note the evidence for the involvement of gem-cutters in the manufacture of dies for the copper coinage of Umayyad Iran (Treadwell 2008).

17 See Fedorov et al. 2008: nos 722 and 723.

18 See Treadwell 2001: Pls 51 and 53 (Shiraz 398 and 408). For Ayyubid coins, see Balog 1980.

4

THE UGLY DUCKLING OF IRANIAN METALWORK? INITIAL REMARKS ON QAJAR COPPER AND COPPER-ALLOY OBJECTS IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF SCOTLAND

ULRIKE AL-KHAMIS AND KATHERINE EREMIN

Among the Islamic metalwork collections of the National Museums of Scotland (NMS) in Edinburgh are some ninety copper and brass items from nineteenth-century Iran, acquired between 1869 and 1994. The first 16 pieces, purchased between 1869 and 1885, all came from dealers, collectors, art professionals and auction houses based in Edinburgh, London and Constantinople. However, between 1885 and 1900, under the directorship of Robert Murdoch Smith – former director of the Persian Telegraph Department in Tehran and, between 1873 and 1884, avid agent for the procurement of Iranian art by the South Kensington Museum[1] – the first Qajar metalwork items reached the Edinburgh Museum directly from Iran. These were obtained from two of Murdoch Smith's old contacts there: Sidney Churchill (1862–1921), a former employee at the Tehran office of the Telegraph Department; and Ernst Hoeltzer (1835–1911), a German engineer with the same service who had settled permanently in the New Julfa district of Isfahan.[2] In 1889, following the exhibition of part of the Richard collection in Paris, Murdoch Smith managed to secure a large group of artefacts from that collection, including several items of Qajar metalwork. Under his auspices, that purchase was subsequently divided between the museums in South Kensington, Edinburgh and Dublin.[3]

After Murdoch Smith's death, the acquisition of Iranian art was no longer pursued with such active interest, and Qajar metalwork especially was no longer favoured. From then on, its acquisition depended entirely on occasional, chance donations from local residents, including two very interesting bequests. The first was given in 1946 by J. Symington-Grieve from North Berwick, and comprises an unparalleled series of 49

sheet brass plaques worked in *repoussé* with scenes taken from traditional, royal and religious Persian iconography, executed in a Qajar style (inv. nos A.1946.69 to 117; Fig. 4.1). The second bequest was received in 1976 from Mrs J.M. Douglas-Hamilton of Poolewe and Isle of Ornsay, and included nine high-quality Qajar copper-alloy pieces (inv. nos A.1976.45 to 53), including an unusual cockerel of impressive size.[4]

To date very little in-depth or systematic work devoted to Qajar metalwork has been published, apart from the initial efforts of scholars such as Jennifer Scarce, A.S. Melikian-Chirvani and, of course, James Allan and his comprehensive study on Qajar steel.[5] The aesthetic and artistic appeal of these pieces certainly seems limited at first glance. Nevertheless, a systematic scientific, technological and art-historical assessment of the Qajar metal objects in the NMS collections reveals interesting facts which have wider implications – not only for our understanding of the objects themselves, but of the working practices and general state of the Iranian metalworking industry during the nineteenth century, as well as wider artistic and cultural trends within Iranian society.

FIG. 4.1 Qajar *repoussé* brass plaque (A.1946.75), part of a set of 49 plaques given by J. Symington-Grieve, North Berwick. Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

The scientific and technological assessment of the Qajar metal pieces in the NMS collections focused on the type and chemical composition of the metals used, the way in which each piece was constructed, and the decorative techniques employed. A range of scientific techniques was employed in the process, chiefly x-radiography to investigate construction, and non-destructive x-ray fluorescence spectroscopy to determine metal compositions. In most cases the analyses were undertaken on unprepared surfaces. Generally, surface composition may vary slightly from that of the original object composition, due to wear over time or even burial, with deviations to be expected in particular with regard to a reduction in zinc and increase in lead and/or tin. However, in the case of the objects examined here, surface alteration is considered unlikely to have had a major effect on the composition. Indeed, the comparison of results before and after abrasion of hidden areas on some of the pieces revealed only minor variations.[6] A small number of samples were obtained from hidden areas and inlays, and analysed using scanning electron microscopy and inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry to determine their composition and structure.

The majority of the objects were composed of brass or a mixed copper alloy, with only a few of copper. Objects worked from sheet or ingots were composed of fairly pure brass, with trace (less than 1 per cent) iron and lead or iron, lead and tin. Many lacked detectable levels of the other common trace elements, such as arsenic, nickel, silver or antimony. The most commonly used brass had 32–38 per cent zinc, but some less zinc-rich brass sheet (with zinc contents as low as 15 per cent) and less pure brass sheet (with around 25 per cent zinc and a few per cent tin and/or lead) was also used.

The compositional range is interesting, as 33 per cent zinc marks the practical maximum for zinc in brass produced by the cementation process, in which copper is heated with zinc ore to allow zinc vapour to be released and permeate the base metal. This is similar to the temperature-dependent boundary between one-phase (lower zinc) and two-phase (higher zinc) brass between 33 and 39 per cent zinc. Brass with higher zinc contents must be produced by co-melting of copper and zinc. Optimal working properties occur in brass with 30 per cent zinc, which requires less annealing when heavily deformed, for example to form sheet. In theory, a 40 per cent thickness reduction can be achieved before annealing is required. Successive stages of hammering followed by annealing are required to form thin sheet from an original cast plate or ingot. In contrast, two-phase brass can be hot worked at around 700 degrees centigrade, eliminating the need for annealing, and requiring only one stage to produce thin sheet.

The use of a two-phase brass is therefore ideal for producing objects from multiple components of thin sheet brass. However, the presence of two phases cannot be proved without x-ray diffraction or metallographic cross-sections, which were not possible for the objects included in this study.

Production by co-melting overtook the cementation process in Europe during the nineteenth century. The sources state that most Qajar copper and brass wares were produced from metal sheet, ingots and scrap metal imported into southern Iran from Britain via India and the Persian Gulf, and into northern Iran from Russia.[7] This would correspond with the fact that many Qajar artefacts are composed of high-zinc brass. Artefacts with lower zinc content could result from the use of the comparatively cheaper cementation brass, from recycling primary brass (since zinc content decreases on remelting), or from the use of older metal stock and/or artefacts. Furthermore, several grades of brass were used in Europe in the nineteenth century and would have been available for import to Iran. Tin and zinc were also imported in ingots or rings from Britain via India.

Only a small number of objects in the NMS collections were constructed from copper sheeting, namely a circular lunch box (A.1870.27.1), and an intriguing lantern (A.1869.13.10, Fig. 4.2). The copper contains a few per cent lead, probably inherited from original cast copper ingots to which a little lead may have been added to aid

FIG. 4.2 Copper and wax cloth lantern (A.1869.13.10). Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland.

casting. Iranian coppersmiths imported copper ingots from Russia and to a lesser extent Britain (via India), which were beaten into form and passed to other workers for finishing.[8]

Hammering, raising and turning were used to form the brass or copper-alloy sheet into the desired forms. Most of the hammered sheet-metal objects are composed of multiple components fashioned into a variety of shapes. Joints are either mechanical or secured with grey (lead-tin or lead) or white (tin-rich) solder. Some objects reveal only minor compositional differences between their individual components and may therefore have been worked from a consistent sheet source. Others reveal more significant compositional differences between the various sections. Occasionally some of the components are even decorated in obviously different styles. This suggests that these objects were probably made by combining a selection of originally unrelated sheet sections or disparate spare parts.

In some instances sheet components are disguised as more solid cast components, for example in the sheet-brass peacock from the Douglas-Hamilton bequest. The head, lower legs and lower base are cast, while the other pieces are worked from sheet. Despite their solid appearance, the upper legs are made of sheet brass filled with lead to give weight to the base.

Although the individual components of an object are often skilfully fabricated with careful seams, these components are frequently combined messily with obvious solder. For example, the main pieces of the peacock are soldered together with extensive and clearly visible grey lead-rich solder, contrasting with the careful joins used within the main pieces; this is especially visible where the wings are fixed to the body and the feathers to the tail. Sometimes such soldered joins may represent repairs or later additions, but in other cases they appear to be original.

Small-scale objects, particularly boxes or containers, were fashioned simply by cutting sheet brass into strips or shaped pieces and joining these with grey tin-rich solder (as in inv. nos A.1890.334, 335, 337 and 339). Occasionally objects rely on mechanical joins, with the edges of one sheet piece folded under those of another (such as on the bottle A.1879.16.2). Screws are rare and, where present, appear to be later repairs.

Interestingly, one contemporary source, the *Jughrafiya-yi Isfahan* by Mirza Husain Khan, describes a similar 'building block' approach in relation to the assembly of contemporary *huqqa* pipes. It reports that in Isfahan it was the work of the haberdashers to supply the separate components of metal *huqqa* pipes among other items.[9] It is likely that this comment refers to the main components of the *huqqa*, i.e. the base, neck, side socket, the element that receives the coal etc.; but an examination of the metal *huqqa*s in the NMS collections shows the combination of multiple, separately worked sheet sections even within the main parts themselves.[10]

Overall, the *huqqa* tops and bases consist of multiple sheet and sometimes cast components of copper, impure brass and, in one case, silver, joined by a combination of mechanical and soldered joins. There are regular discrepancies between the bases, tops and side sockets in both technical composition and decorative style, and on one occasion (A.1873.43.4) the fit between the base and top of the *huqqa* is so poor that a piece of cork had to be fitted around the inner tube of the top to ensure cohesion.

All in all, the scientific and technological assessment of the NMS material suggests that Iranian metalworkers in the later nineteenth century took a pragmatic and economical approach to the creation of their sheet wares and did not hesitate to utilise distinct, disjointed, recycled or second-hand elements in an object which was designed to appeal through its overall effect rather than an attention to detail. An array of hammered and cast components not necessarily made together or from the same metal source was combined without great concern.

As yet it is not possible to determine the various possible sources for the sheet metals used for any of the Qajar objects examined, beyond the general assumption that much of it came from Russian, British or other European sources. Fortuitously, however, the close examination of three repoussé plaques (A.1946.69, 70 and 75; see Fig. 4.1) revealed the stamp of the English producer, still visible on the back of the metal sheet used. Its wording 'SEACOMBE MILL COY' and 'BIBBY SONS and CO' contains historical clues that help to place the period for the sheet production between 1853 and 1864.[11] The metal composition of these plaques (brass with 36 per cent zinc and trace iron and lead) is similar to much of the other Qajar metalwork examined, suggesting that this may also have been made from nineteenth-century English metal.

Apart from sheet-metal objects, several objects or components were cast, normally from highly variable, impure brass or mixed copper-alloy compositions with significant zinc, lead and tin, and trace iron, silver and antimony. The compositions are not dissimilar to earlier seventeenth- to eighteenth-century cast artefacts from Iran, and the metal used may be derived, at least in part, from recycling older artefacts. After casting, most of these objects appear to have been turned before being decorated. Interestingly, many of the artefacts produced mainly by casting additionally include components raised from the more usual sheet brass. In most cases this combination appears original, but the amalgamation of originally unrelated pieces also occurred.

Turning from issues of metal composition and construction to decoration, the objects examined show a range of decorative techniques, including incising, engraving, punching, embossing and piercing, using varied punches, chisels and engraving tools. The decorative schemes – which largely rely on conventionalised and often debased scenes and figures from the traditional repertoire of Persian royal iconography and literature as well as popular culture, set against vegetal backgrounds – generally have

their main outlines drawn with a chisel, while finer details are cut with an engraving tool or created with punches. A French scientist named Olmer, who was resident in Isfahan in the nineteenth century, records exactly this approach: 'All the designs are made with the chisel and hammer, and they are rather coarse and repetitive, but the craftsmen are very able and fast in making them from memory'.[12] The background is normally textured, often done with a complex punch or a variety of matting tools; it may then be in-filled with a black organic material,[13] though in some cases it is hard to be certain if the object retains remnants of this infill or if it is dirt, or both.

Combined with the other techniques, piercing with a chisel to create openwork designs was also common. Two unfinished objects among the Qajar metalwork in the NMS – a vase and plate obtained in Isfahan (A.1895.365&A, Fig. 4.3) – demonstrate the process of combining such decorative techniques. First the main lines were made using a chisel; then the internal lines were cut, also with a chisel; next the internal details were cut with a finer chisel. Then the inner areas were decorated with a variety of single and multiple ring punches, and finally openwork areas were chiselled out. Both items have pitch backing to support the walls while the design was pierced.

In addition to these various decorative techniques, some objects were enhanced by other methods or materials, including enamelling and gilding, or the application of

FIG. 4.3 Unfinished brass plate embedded in a pitch base for working (A.1895.365). Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland.

turquoise, or black or red organic inlays and occasionally silver inlay. In one example, an incised silver sheet had enamel laid onto it and a fine powder gold laid onto the enamel. Turquoise inlay is normally inset into a mixture of calcite and organic resins. Two distinct types of silver inlay can be observed. The first occurs on two objects, a hammered and finely engraved brass tray acquired from the Richard collection in 1890 and recorded as coming from Kashan (A.1890.331) and a composite lidded urn shaped from engraved, punched and openwork sheet brass (A.1876.48). The technique observed on these two objects involves fine silver strips hammered into deep chiselled grooves to provide a linear framework for the decorative schemes employed. Olmer observed this very inlay technique while in Isfahan, which continues earlier practices on Iranian metalwork: 'Many copper [*sic*] vessels are made, and above all trays, incrusted with silver wire. To that end the design is made with a chisel, then a silver wire is put into the groove, which is a little bigger. Then they tap this with a hammer, while heating the object and repeating this a few times. The effect is nice, though the incrustations do not last.'[14]

The second silver inlay technique, which involves thin silver sheet laid over brass projections, appears as a major decorative element on a composite sheet-brass *huqqa* base (A.1879.16.2, Plate 1). Again harking back to older traditions, this technique appears to involve the relevant areas being chiselled to produce a multitude of tiny projections in the brass. Silver foil was then hammered over these raised areas. The inlay on the *huqqa* base is surprisingly complete, and it is probable that heating of the artefact helped to bond the silver strongly to the brass.

On occasion objects could have their decorated surfaces overlaid by a silver-coloured layer as a last touch. One object, a lunchbox hammered from copper sheet, revealed comprehensive surface tinning, the tin being imported from India.[15] Such a coating was commonly employed on Iranian copper wares for culinary as well as decorative purposes. Generally, very thin tin sheet was fused onto the heated vessel and the excess liquid tin brushed off. Again, the technique is recorded by Olmer: 'Often the vases are tinned. Then the vases are rubbed with verjuice [a liquid made from very sour, acidic fruit], and then powdered with coal. They are then cleaned, tinned and the chased spots come out the colour of copper after tinning.'[16] On a pair of candlesticks (A.1881.37.15 and 16, Fig. 4.4) surface treatment involved the application of mercury silvering and included both visible and invisible components, suggesting that perhaps these items were intended to imitate solid silver objects.

CREATING A CONTEXT FOR THE NMS COLLECTIONS

Placing the scientific and technological data into a wider context proved challenging. Virtually none of the acquisition records provided any tangible clues to specific provenance or dating, while trying to compare the NMS objects with those in other collections was hampered by a total dearth of published studies on Qajar metalwork. Indeed, to date there are no comparable studies on the technology of Qajar metalwork, on production mechanisms or dynamics, decorative techniques, styles or issues of iconography, nor even any object typologies. The array of decorative styles that can be observed on the Qajar copper and copper-alloy metalwork in the NMS – which indicate innovative approaches as well as historicising trends and a reliance on European models – remains uncontextualised, and no attempt has yet been made to put these into clear chronological and geographical frameworks. No clear links have yet been established between specific objects and their styles, and the numerous, clearly identifiable production centres across Iran referred to in the sources;[17] moreover, there is no clear understanding

FIG. 4.4 Mercury-gilded Qajar candlestick with figural scenes (A.1881.37.16). Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland.

of the dynamics that might have operated between major centres, such as the movement of craftsmen from Shiraz or Isfahan to Tehran in the later nineteenth century.[18]

Given the general lack of published data on the metalwork itself, it is the extensive body of nineteenth-century literary sources that provides most useful information about the status, activity and output of the metalworking industries in nineteenth-century Iran. These sources reveal that the metalworking industries formed an important, extensive and relatively prosperous part of Iran's economic framework, to the extent that by 1910, there were 20,000 metalworkers in Iran, making them the second most numerous group of craftsmen, after those involved in carpetmaking.[19] The most extensive branch of the Qajar metalworking industry was devoted to the production of functional copper wares for daily use, and travellers repeatedly mention 'the ingenious sets of pots and pans, trays and ablution sets'.[20]

Another type of copper utensil often referred to by contemporary observers was the *fanoos* or Chinese lantern (also known as the *fanus-kghadhi*, *fanus-sham'i* or *fanar*). This is represented in the NMS collections by an example acquired in 1869, which also makes it the first Qajar piece to enter the collections (A.1869.13.10, Fig. 4.2). These lanterns could also be made of paper, but mostly they consisted of a cylindrical lamp made of a pleated piece of waxed cloth, oiled muslin or varnished paper held together by two pierced and engraved copper-sheet plates on the top and bottom. The piercing was obviously functional as well as decorative, as it permitted airflow and the emission of light.[21] In the case of the NMS lantern, the copper elements show a combination of scrolling, figurative scenes, cartouches of cursive inscriptions and geometric detailing, which have been crudely repaired in several places. In the top plate is a lidded hole to allow access to the lantern's interior. The bottom part has a socket to receive the candle. When not in use the lamp could be collapsed for easy transport and storage. It appears that this lantern type was in widespread use throughout Iran from at least the seventeenth century and was made in various centres, including Tabriz and Mashhad.[22] Furthermore, James Justinian Morier (1780–1849), a British diplomat and writer well travelled in Iran, mentions that Kashan was the foremost centre for high-quality copperware in Iran at the time, and describes a lantern from that centre which resembles our object closely.[23] These lanterns came in varying sizes: small ones were carried by pedestrians who were obliged by law to use them in the absence of street lighting to illuminate their path at night; and a clearly determined hierarchy of larger ones carried in front of important personages of varying rank, often between two servants on a pole.[24]

Intriguingly, the NMS lantern is referred to in the acquisition records as a sacred-fire lamp and as 'Parsee' in origin, suggesting perhaps that this particular piece may have served to illuminate a Zoroastrian fire temple. In fact, a very similar lamp, though much later in date, was published as coming from Yazd, a well-known Zoroastrian centre.[25]

Another group of metalwork objects occasionally referred to in the sources are candlesticks, which are represented among the NMS collections by a pair of finely worked pieces with a silvered surface, acquired in 1881 (A.1881.37.15 and 16, Fig. 4.4). Typologically, these items perpetuate a Safavid form, but both their construction and decoration are different from the earlier examples. Although the pieces appear cast, they are in fact worked from numerous sheet pieces, each section decorated before they were joined together; their weight is considerable because of a heavy brass insert in the foot and the cast handles which are clumsily attached by screws. Unlike the more restrained Safavid models, with their emphasis on pious inscriptions and scrolling or abstract decoration, these candlesticks are full of figurative imagery, depicting an array of monkey-, elephant- or devil-headed figures, acrobats, wrestlers, horseriders with falcons or stabbing dragons, seated figures and what appear to be the contorted bodies of dancing ladies, not unlike those often seen in Qajar oil paintings.

While some of these motifs are undoubtedly taken from earlier canons of Iranian iconography or can be traced to contemporary lithographies of popular lore,[26] others are more enigmatic. However, since several contemporary observers noted silver, 'nickel-plated' or 'copper-tinned' candlesticks with tulip globes being used to hold the best candles during public festivities in Tehran and other Iranian cities, it may not be too far-fetched to suggest that some motifs may make direct reference to the jesters, acrobats, mummers wearing masks, monkeys or marionettes encountered as part of public entertainment at the time.[27] In 1807, for example, Waring mentioned that amusements in Iran included 'dancers, lootees and a kind of buffoon-like jesters';[28] while as late as the early 1900s Dorothée de Warzée noted that 'crowds collect in the streets and open squares … to watch the jugglers … There are still also to be seen a few mummers wearing masks, with tame bears and monkeys, who collect crowds and ask for pence. Now and again one will see a snakecharmer. Sometimes there is a marionette show …'[29] Candlesticks were also found in private and public buildings: Fath 'Ali Shah (r.1801–34), for example, is known to have provided a lamp and two silver candlesticks, which by this time would have been enhanced by a glass flame protector, for each new room added to his harem.[30]

As for the provenance of the NMS candlesticks, the style of their decoration as well as the decorative techniques employed may point to Isfahan. According to the observations made by the resident British Consul, John Richard Preece, in 1894, 'some very pretty lantern, flower vases, and candlesticks are made [in Isfahan], both engraved and perforated *à jour*, quite the most pleasing effect is produced when the two systems are combined. If anyone who wishes to see and know what this brass ware is really like, I can but advise them to go to the South Kensington Museum.'[31]

Yet another genre of the metalworking industry that is noted by contemporary observers is decorative brassware. The unfinished demonstration pieces within the

NMS collections (Fig. 4.3) were procured in Isfahan by Hoeltzer, and are therefore certainly Isfahani products. Indeed, the production techniques mentioned above, and in particular openwork, have been associated with Isfahani silver and brass production.[32] In turn, the openwork decoration on finished products like a lidded urn in the NMS (A.1879.15) is closely related to the outlined designs on the unfinished pieces, both technically and stylistically; conveniently, in this instance, the acquisition record from 1879 actually states Isfahan as the place of origin. Other contemporary sources highlight Isfahan as the foremost brass-working centre in Iran, at least from the late 1870s onwards. Eye-witnesses comment not only on the excellence and vast technical and stylistic variety of its wares, but also on the diversification of its highly specialised workforce, which included brass- and coppersmiths, tinners and embossers engaged in inlay work.[33] As late as 1966, Wulff singled out pierced- or fret-work as one of the specialities of Isfahan, 'much applied to … incense burners, lamp shades and vases'.[34]

Finally, one group of utensils that particularly fascinated travellers to Iran was the *kalian*, or water pipe, which formed an indispensable part of Qajar life. Rich and influential persons made a point of owning large collections of preciously ornamented *kalian*s, which were brought out one after the other during long evenings of celebration or social entertainment. A beautifully worked example of tinned copper, silver and brass decorated with enamel and gilding was acquired by the NMS in 1886 (A.1886.400, Plate 2). This certainly belonged to the category of show pieces, even though its appearance is much richer than its actual material value. It is composed of several pieces of sheet metal with cunningly hidden seams and mechanical joins. In areas of missing enamel, the underlying silver can be seen to be engraved with single strokes in a zig-zag motif, presumably to aid adhesion. The brass and silver sheet were embossed from the front, working against the pitch-filled interior and then engraved and punched. The silver may have been deliberately blackened with lamp soot and oil or with sulphur, as is still the practice in modern times.[35]

As for the piece's place of origin, this may be Shiraz, which is mentioned by various sources as the foremost centre for the arts of enamel work, gold and silver repoussé and, in particular, richly ornamented *kalian*s.[36] Again, however, more research is needed to attribute the piece beyond any doubt.

The observations brought together in this article, from a combined scientific and art-historical analysis of Qajar copper and brass objects in the collections of the National Museums of Scotland, not only reveal highly interesting technical facts regarding their materials, construction and decoration, but also help to unlock these objects' potential to deepen our knowledge about the wider historical, social, cultural and economic context of both the Qajar metalworking industry and its consumers, at home and abroad.

NOTES

1 Komaroff 2000: 4; Masuya 2000: 42.
2 Masuya 2000: 43.
3 Masuya 2000: 44.
4 For a discussion of these brass plaques, see al-Khamis and Evans 2004.
5 Scarce 1991; Melikian-Chirvani 1983; Allan and Gilmour 2000.
6 It should be noted that surface dezincification due to annealing (reheating) at high temperatures and/or long periods of time was previously observed in several brass astrolabes, and the possibility that this occurred in some of the Qajar artefacts cannot be ruled out. See Newbury 2005: 186–87.
7 Bradley-Birt 1909: 269, 277; Floor 2003: 212, 218.
8 Floor 2003: 221; Fraser, cited in Floor 2003: 215.
9 Floor 1971: 120.
10 The relevant object numbers are A.1886.397, A.1873.43.4, A.1879.16.2 and A.1890.327.
11 Al-Khamis and Evans 2004: 137–38.
12 Floor 2003: 222.
13 The organic inlay varies, but red shellac is common in areas of thick inlay.
14 Floor 2003: 226; Olmer 1908: 84–85.
15 Fraser, cited in Floor 2003: 211.
16 Floor 2003: 222; Olmer 1908: 84.
17 The centres mentioned are Hamadan, Shiraz, Mashad, Torbat-e Heidari, Daragez, Shirvan Berjan, Astarabad, Bojnord, Amol, Khoy, Resht, Qom Kerman, Qazvin, Kashan, Isfahan, Zenjan, Tabriz, Kermanshah: see the references in the following note.
18 Floor 2003: 213–19, 224; Wilson 1896: 84, 145; Rosen und Nachtigallen 2000: 70; Melikian-Chirvani 1983: 311–28; Scarce 1991: 939–45.
19 Floor 2003: 31.
20 Scarce 1991: 941; Melikian-Chirvani 1983; Wilson 1896: 126, 251; Rosen and Nachtigallen 2000: 70.
21 Floor 2003: 170.
22 Wilson 1896: 69; Floor 2003: 170–71.
23 Floor 2003: 114, 170–71; Morier 1818: 161–62.
24 Scarce 1991: 942; Polak 1865, vol. II: 77–78; Wilson 1896: 68; Arnold 1877, vol. I: 214; Binning 1857: 217; Floor 2003: 121, 123, 155–72; Rosen und Nachtigallen 2000: 66–67; d'Allemagne 1911: 53, Fig. 10.
25 Gluck, Gluck and Penton 1977: 120.
26 See Marzolph 2001.
27 Landor 1902, vol. I: 216; Morier 1818: 391.
28 Waring 1807: 55. The term 'lootee' was understood at the time to refer to an immoral, effeminate scoundrel.

29 De Warzée 1913: 45.

30 Floor 2003: 166–67; Wilson 1896: 184–85.

31 Preece, cited in Floor 2003: 167–68.

32 Scarce 1991: 942–43.

33 Floor 1971: 104–5; Floor 2003: 9, 218–19, 221–22; Wilson 1896: 154–55; Landor 1902, vol. I: 305–6; Scarce 1991: 942.

34 Wulff 1966: 37.

35 Wulff 1966: 36.

36 Polak 1865: 186; Rochechouart 1867: 36, 251–54; Bradley-Birt 1909: 135–36; Waring 1807: 47.

PART 2

IRAN AND INDIA

5

GILDING, INLAY AND THE MOBILITY OF METALLURGY: A CASE OF FRAUD IN MEDIEVAL KASHMIR

FINBARR BARRY FLOOD

The rise of an inlaid metalwork industry in Khurasan, eastern Iran, during the second half of the twelfth century constitutes one of the canonical subjects of Islamic art history. The spectacular candlesticks, ewers and pen-boxes that form the most common products of the Khurasani metalwork industry are among the objects of Islamic art most familiar to any museum-goer in Europe or the United States. While the Hermitage pen-box (*qalamdan*) dated 542/1148 gives us a *terminus ad quem* for the use of the technique in Khurasan, the most spectacular example of the genre, the cast bronze vessel of 559/1163 known as the Bobrinski bucket, localises the phenomenon by naming its own place of production as the Khurasani city of Herat, now in western Afghanistan.[1] The industry seems therefore to have flourished in the western territories of the Ghurid sultans. The Ghurids were parvenus from the mountains of central Afghanistan who, for a few brief decades at the end of the twelfth century, ruled over a vast swathe of territory extending across the modern states of Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan and India. The remarkable transregional polity that they created was ephemeral, collapsing in the face of external pressures and internal struggles over succession around 1210.[2] Nevertheless, its legacy left an enduring impression upon the cultural and political life of the eastern Islamic world, witnessed on the one hand by the emergence of the Delhi sultanate, and on the other by the apparent westward migration of certain elements in the repertoire of the Herati metalworkers (most obviously animated scripts), which appear in the inlaid brass vessels produced in northern Iraq and Syria in the first half of the thirteenth century.[3]

There has been considerable speculation concerning the impetus for the emergence of the Khurasani inlaid metalwork industry at this time. Copper (and more rarely silver) inlay is occasionally used to highlight engraved decoration and inscriptions on Iranian and Iraqi metalwork as early as the ninth or tenth centuries,[4] but the exponential growth in the use of inlay on both cast and beaten metal vessels produced in Herat and other centres in Khurasan from the twelfth century has generally been attributed to the chronic silver shortage then afflicting the region. James Allan (among others) has concluded that by around 1100 'many silversmiths must have given up working in precious metal and begun working in sheet bronze or brass instead.'[5] Secondary factors cited to explain the florescence of an inlaid metalwork industry at this time are the rise of an urban bourgeoisie, and the desire to render increasingly complex surface designs more legible. In this respect, the emergence of inlay as a standard decorative technique in eastern Iran might be compared to the use of blue-glazed elements in the architecture of western Iran from the eleventh century onwards to aid the legibility of the increasingly complex brick designs, a feature that appeared in eastern Khurasan and Afghanistan around the time that the Herati inlaid metal industries were flourishing.[6]

These phenomena are clearly relevant to, perhaps even necessary for, the emergence of an inlaid metal industry in Herat around 1150, but they do not in themselves explain why it emerged there and then. It remains to explain the unprecedented facility with which the metalworkers of Herat gave themselves to the production of spectacular metal forms using copper and silver inlay on a previously unknown scale. Here several scholars, including James Allan, have suggested that enhanced contacts with India as a result of the eastward expansion of the Ghaznavid and Ghurid sultanates of Afghanistan during the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries may have provided the impetus for these innovations in twelfth-century Khurasani metalwork. It has been suggested, for example, that a penchant for cast bronze animal and bird figures in eastern Iranian metalwork of the tenth and eleventh centuries may have been inspired by Buddhist or Hindu metal sculptures from Afghanistan and Kashmir circulating westward as booty, gifts or trade objects.[7]

Other scholars have looked to technique rather than form, pointing to the frequency with which inlay was used on western Indian metalwork in the centuries preceding the emergence of the Herati inlaid metalworking industries. The relatively recent identification of Kashmir as a major centre for the production of elaborate inlaid brass sculptures has, for example, led to speculation about possible technical relationships with the metalworking traditions of neighbouring Afghanistan and Iran. In various publications on Kashmiri art, Pratapaditya Pal has suggested that Kashmiri artists may have popularised the technique of metal inlay in the Islamic world as a result of increased contacts with the Ghaznavid sultanate during the course of the eleventh century:

> Indeed, the art of inlay seems to have played a more dominant role in the bronzes of Kashmir than in those of any other school in India. And it is not improbable that the technique was later transported into eastern Persia through Ghazni following the time of Mahmud (986–1030 AD). It is somewhat curious that inlaid brass became the favored medium of Persian metal-smiths mostly after the eleventh century.[8]

More recently, Rachel Ward has outlined the factors that may have led to the development of the inlaid metalwork industry in Khurasan, concluding that

> … increased contact between Khurasan and northern India must have heightened awareness of the technique. Copper and silver inlays were used in Kashmir and north-east India in the eleventh and twelfth centuries to emphasise various features of idols, such as the eyes or the 'sacred thread' (symbolising the spiritual birth of the high-caste Hindu). Booty brought back from Ghaznavid and Ghurid sorties into India would have introduced Islamic metalworkers to this work, and Indian craftsmen may even have been employed in local workshops.[9]

As a major cultural centre with a flourishing tradition of inlaid metalwork, Kashmir would indeed be the logical (but not the only possible) source of any Indic inspiration. The temples of the Kashmir Valley were distinguished by their predilection for sacred images of metal rather than stone.[10] Most of the surviving examples range in height between 4 and 17 inches (10 to 43cm), but texts suggest that Kashmiri craftsmen produced metal icons of great size, and in precious metals as well as base.[11] Elaborate inlay was a defining characteristic of Kashmiri metal sculpture, being more popular in Kashmir than in any other region of India, and more popular on Buddhist than Hindu images, for reasons that are not entirely clear.[12] Silver was used to inlay eyes, sacred markings, garments, ornaments (necklaces, ear-rings, belt buckles) and thrones, while copper was generally reserved for minor body parts – lips, nails, nipples – and ornaments. More rarely, silver foil was applied to select facial features and hair. A black bituminous substance was used in many cases to highlight eyes, flowers, crowns, clothing and the chased lines of hair.[13]

There are a number of basic aesthetic and technical differences between Khurasani and Kashmiri metalwork, among them the ratio of beaten to cast metal, the lead content of the brass medium, and the frequency of inscriptions,[14] but there are also broad similarities between the techniques of inlay used in both regions. In both traditions, linear inlay was usually hammered into place along incised and chiselled lines that were undercut. The method used for spatial inlay was also comparable, with the edges of inlaid areas undercut, the inlay sheet laid in position, and the lip of the cut hammered into place over it. In both Kashmiri and Khurasani inlaid metalwork, therefore, the brass matrix overlies the edges of the silver or copper inlay and holds it in place.[15] To these specific similarities, one might also add the common use of a bituminous black

substance and the basic aesthetic principle of using inlay to provide striking visual effects while aiding the legibility of surface designs.[16]

In addition to these general technical parallels, the broad historical circumstances were conducive to the circulation of Kashmiri metalwork throughout the eastern Islamic lands. Between the ninth and eleventh centuries, Kashmiri bronzes were highly prized in the temples of the Himalayas and plains India,[17] but through looting and trading also travelled well beyond the confines of the subcontinent: examples have been discovered in Kyrgyzstan and even as far away as a Viking site at Lake Malär in Sweden.[18] The rise of small quasi-independent kingdoms on the eastern edge of the Dar al-Islam during the same period created the right conditions for the circulation of Indian metal sculptures within Iran and Iraq. The Tahirids of Khurasan (205–78/821–91) and the Saffarids of Sistan (247–393/861–1003) frequently used gifts of Hindu and Buddhist metal statues looted during campaigns of expansion in the east to articulate or negotiate their rather complex relationships with the Baghdad caliphate. In 250/864, for example, a number of idols were among the Afghan exotica sent to Baghdad from Kabul by Muhammad ibn Tahir. In 256/870 fifty gold and silver idols were dispatched from Afghanistan (probably Bamiyan) as gifts to the new caliph al-Mu'tamid from the de facto ruler of Sistan, Ya'qub ibn Layth al-Saffar.[19] A rare insight into the interest generated by the display of these exotic metal sculptures in the central Islamic lands is conveyed by an account of a group of Indian metal figures sent to Baghdad by Ibn Layth al-Saffar, in 283/896. The group, which consisted of an enormous brass idol (*sanam*) of a four-armed woman on a cart flanked by two smaller idols, attracted considerable interest among the Baghdad populace.[20]

The westward circulation of looted Indian stone and metal objects continued as the frontier of the Dar al-Islam shifted eastward in succeeding centuries, providing further opportunities for craftsmen to observe the products of Indian artistry. The discovery of a marble Brahma sculpture (along with other Hindu statuary, including a large Nandi, or bull of Shiva) in the palace of the Ghaznavid sultan Mas'ud at Ghazni (505/1112) offers tangible support for textual accounts of Indian three-dimensional images being carried back to Afghanistan.[21] Among the Indian loot seized during the conquest of Ajmir, capital of the Chauhan rajas of north India, by the sultans of Ghur in the last decade of the twelfth century were two golden birds (perhaps Garuda eagles) each the size of a camel, which were mounted on the roof of the Ghurid palace in Firuzkuh in Afghanistan.[22]

While the broad cultural conditions may therefore have provided opportunities for aesthetic or technical innovation, ultimately the evidence for the impact of Indian artefacts on Iranian inlaid metalwork is circumstantial. Moreover, in positing a role for Kashmiri metalwork we encounter a chronological problem that has gone largely

unremarked. Although the use of silver inlay is found on Kashmiri bronzes as late as the early eleventh century (witnessed for example on an image of the Buddhist deity Avalokiteshvara dedicated during the reign of Queen Didda [r. 980–1003]), the use of lavish inlay on Kashmiri sculptures declines into the eleventh century, with copper inlay rarely found at this date. In fact, rich inlay seems to have been a particular feature of artistic production during the Karkota period (c. 600–855/6), with little evidence for extensive usage after the ninth century, with the exception of the eyes of bronze sculptures, which were routinely inlaid with silver.[23] In other words, the most complex instances of Kashmiri inlaid brasses pre-date the earliest dated example of Khurasani inlaid metal, the Hermitage pen-box of 542/1148, by more than three centuries.[24]

To highlight the circumstantial (and even problematic) nature of the evidence for a Kashmiri role in the rise of a Khurasani inlaid metalwork industry is by no means to deny the likelihood of artistic exchange between eastern Iran and western India. It is, for example, possible that any impetus for innovation in Khurasani metalwork came not from Kashmir but from other areas of north India. The obvious candidates would be the Swat Valley or the small Himalayan kingdom of Chamba, both of which were adjacent to Kashmir and the Ghaznavid and Ghurid territories in the Punjab and produced brasses inspired by those of Kashmir, although with a more sparing use of inlay, during the eighth through to tenth centuries.[25] The Swat Valley (Udayana) was a major centre of both Tantric Buddhism and Hinduism possibly as late as the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, and a mosque with a foundation inscription of 440/1048–9 was recently discovered in the region, suggesting that Islam may have co-existed with other religions while the area was at least nominally under Ghaznavid control.[26] To this may be added the suggestion that Swat produced high-tin bronze vessels similar to those known from Ghaznavid Afghanistan during the same period.[27]

One further under-researched but potentially significant factor is the metalwork produced in Sind, in the southern reaches of the Indus Valley, which was nominally under Ghaznavid and Ghurid control during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. To judge from random finds such as a 38-inch-high bronze image of Brahma now in the Karachi Museum, the area was a major metalworking centre on the eve of the Arab conquest in the early eighth century. The Brahma reflects a fondness for inlay seen in other western Indian sculptures as late as the twelfth century.[28] It seems likely that production of Hindu and/or Buddhist sacred statues in base and precious metals continued after the Arab conquest, for in 271/884 three silver idols (*asnam*) were sent to the Abbasid caliph by the Arab governor of Sind along with other gifts.[29] That the region continued to produce spectacular cast metalwork after the Arab conquest is also attested by the four monumental cast bronze door-knockers from Mansura, each over half a metre in diameter, and ringed by an inscription incised in foliated Kufic

script, which bear the name of 'Abdullah, the Habbarid amir of Sind, who reigned around 270/883.[30]

Most scholars have predicated the possibility of a relationship between Indian and Iranian inlaid metalwork on the circulation of worked metal objects that might have served as sources of inspiration. There is, however, no reason to limit such circulations to objects; the artisans responsible for their manufacture may also have circulated.[31] The co-option of Indian rajas as Ghaznavid tributaries, the dependence of the Ghaznavid armies on Indian soldiery, and the biographies of several Indians who rose to prominence in the service of the sultans of Afghanistan all suggest a degree of cultural fluidity and personal mobility between eastern Iran and western India during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The presence of an Indian quarter in Ghazni, populated by the families of the Indian soldiery highlights the gap between the normative rhetoric of the Arabic and Persian chroniclers and the pragmatism that prevailed in practice. The presence of temples and icons (including, perhaps, metal icons) serving this community can perhaps be assumed even if not mentioned by sources keen to emphasise the orthodoxy of their patrons.[32]

That the various Indian contacts of the Ghaznavid and Ghurid sultanates had an impact on artistic production in Afghanistan is not in doubt. Their material effects are, for example, witnessed in the tentative reception of architectonic elements of Indic origin in the terracotta ornaments of the palace of Mas'ud III at Ghazni (505/1112) and their ubiquity in marble carvings from Bust and Ghazni datable to the last decades of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth: that is, precisely during the period when large swaths of north India were being incorporated into the Ghurid sultanate.[33] The appearance of these elements is likely to reflect the presence of Indian masons, who may also be responsible for certain technical features such as the use of cut brick in the minaret of Mas'ud (d. 508/1115) at Ghazni.[34] Similarly it has been suggested that Indian die-cutters may have participated in the production of Ghaznavid and Ghurid coins in Afghanistan.[35]

Given this Indian artisanal diaspora, the looted Indian metalwork that continued to flow westwards during this period may well have been accompanied by skilled metalworkers, whether carried off as slaves or migrating in order to maximise the opportunities available to them. This was a two-way traffic, however. A chance reference to a royal commission in a Sanskrit chronicle from Kashmir attests to the presence of a migrant Turkic metalworker in the region during the eleventh century, a reminder that the value placed on unusual technical skills could cut across ethnic, geographic and sectarian boundaries. Although so far neglected by historians of Islamic art, this Kashmiri text helps construct a broader context within which to consider the mobility of metalworking techniques between India and eastern Iran on the eve

of the rise of the Khurasani inlaid metalwork industry. The reference in question appears in the *Rajatarangini* (*Sea of Kings*), a Sanskrit dynastic epic composed by the Kashmiri court poet Kalhana around 1150 AD. This offers abundant evidence for the military and cultural contacts between Kashmir and the adjacent Turko-Persian sultanates. These contacts include the presence of *Mlecchas* or non-caste foreigners, some of whom were Turkic mercenaries, in the armies of the Kashmiri rajas as early as the eighth century, echoing the later inclusion of Indian soldiery and generals in Ghaznavid and Ghurid armies.[36]

The transregional circulations well attested in the martial sphere also extended to the realm of artistic production, for among the Turks that the *Rajatarangini* mentions is one who features in a fascinating tale regarding a craftsman who came to work on a Shiva temple built by King Kalasha, who reigned over the Kashmir Valley between 1063 and 1089. The shrine was constructed from stone, as is typical in Kashmir, but had roof ornaments of gold, including a parasol (*chatr*) that appears to have been gilded more by default than design. Discussing the ornaments of the temple, Kalhana relates the following story:

> When the king wished to put a gold parasol over the [temple of Shiva] *kalaśeśa*, there came to him a craftsman (*shilpi*) from the *Turuṣka* country. This [man] said that he could make the parasol with many thousands of gold [pieces], secreting the art he knew of putting gold on copper. He remained for several days enjoying the king's hospitality, till the minister, Nonaka, who had a very sharp intellect, discovered his art by means of inference. Put [thus] to shame, he went as he had come, and that parasol was constructed [at the expense of] a very small number of gold pieces.[37]

The published Kashmiri gilded sculptures are all quite small – usually less than 4 inches (10cm) high – much smaller than a monumental parasol for a royal temple. The scale and likely appearance of this type of feature may be imagined, however, from the paintings on the Avalokiteshvara icon in the Sumtsek monastery at Alchi in Ladakh, western Himalayas. This Buddhist kingdom was sandwiched between the Turko-Persian sultanates of Afghanistan to the west, the Hindu polity of Kashmir to the south, and Tibet to the east. With their mix of Hindu and Buddhist devotional scenes and their topographic references to the Kashmir Valley, the paintings at Alchi have been attributed to the hand of Kashmiri artists working just before 1200.[38] Among them is an image of a *linga* housed within a Shiva temple, the central spire (*shikara)* of which is surmounted by a high golden parasol (*chatr*).[39]

The term *Turushka*, or 'Turk', used to denote the fraudulent craftsman, frequently served in medieval Sanskrit texts and inscriptions not only as a narrow ethnic appellation but also to refer to Muslims in general.[40] In other passages of the *Rajatarangini*, the term designates people who are very clearly Muslims. For example, speaking of King Harsha

(1089–1101), the successor of Kalasha, the chronicle cites his fondness for pork, in contrast to his *Turushka* army captains, who though *Mlecchas*, evidently refrained from the forbidden meat.[41] Famed for his iconoclastic destruction of Hindu and Buddhist icons, a quality associated with invading Muslim armies, Harsha earned the epithet *rajaturushka* or 'Turk King'.[42]

That the duplicitous craftsman came from the *Turushka* country (*Turushkadesha*) may indicate that he was a Muslim who journeyed to Kashmir from the neighbouring Ghaznavid sultanate or its territories in the Punjab. This passage is therefore of great interest for a number of reasons. First, it suggests that neither religion nor ethnicity were impediments to the employ of a skilled artist on a royal project, even a religious commission. Second, it attests the presence of a Turkic metalsmith in the 'Hindu' kingdom of Kashmir, highlighting the role of itinerant craftsmen in facilitating the transfer of metal technology between Kashmir and the Dar al-Islam. Third, it raises the possibility that despite their proximity, certain techniques of decorative surface treatment that were common in the luxury metalwork of one region were not as familiar in the other.

Surviving medieval Kashmiri brasses tend to confirm this impression. Pal has suggested that the vogue for rich surface treatments in the earliest Kashmiri brasses reflects the desire to emulate gilded Sasanian metalwork.[43] Whether or not this is so, with few exceptions,[44] gilding is conspicuous by its rarity on Kashmiri brasses, which generally eschew it in favour of inlay; gilding occurred on fewer than 15 per cent of 60 Kashmiri metal sculptures studied in the 1980s.[45] This stands in marked contrast to the frequent gilding of Nepalese and Tibetan metal sculptures inspired by Kashmiri brasses.[46] The use of gilding was also relatively common on metal icons produced in Gujarat in western India, as a gilded and inlaid copper Jain altarpiece dated 988 from Broach indicates.[47]

Despite the periodic silver shortage that afflicted the eastern Islamic world, the existence of a metalworking industry in Ghazni that produced both gold and silver vessels has been demonstrated.[48] Moreover, both texts and surviving artefacts attest the use of mercury gilding in the Ghaznavid sultanate.[49] One can easily imagine, therefore, how a Kashmiri ruler, desiring to imbue his temple with large and lavish golden ornaments, might have come to employ the services of a craftsman from the Ghaznavid territories. Since gilding was not commonly used in Kashmiri metalwork, this may have facilitated the deception of the wily Turk. One further point to bear in mind is the possibility that the baldachin was made of beaten metal, a rarity in Kashmir, where casting was the norm.

The import of a Turkic artisan was not an isolated incidence, but coincides with a vogue for elements of *Turushka* culture in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.[50] As R.L. Hangloo has noted, the evidence from the *Rajatarangini* and other texts

indicates that 'there was a constant cultural exchange, a commercial relationship and mutual dependence in artisanal skills and military techniques from the middle of the eighth century.'[51] We are told that in the decades following the construction of the Shiva baldachin, King Harsha introduced changes in fashion and personal adornment, popularising a type of attire that 'was fit for a king'. We have few details of this attire, but in view of Harsha's other *Turushka* leanings, Aurel Stein noted the likelihood that this was a style of dress associated with the Muslim sultanates to the West.[52] Around 1200, the rulers of the western Tibetan region of Ladakh had themselves depicted in Turko-Persian garb, wearing sleeved, tailored, mid-calf-length coats (*qaba'*), closed by fastening one side across the other, some of which bore pseudo-Arabic inscriptions. Since the Ladakhi rulers had close ties with Kashmir, ties that extended to the use of Kashmiri artists in the production of their self-representations, the paintings from Ladakh may indicate the adoption of similar modes of dress in the court of the rajas of Kashmir.[53] This mode of dress was originally associated with the Turks, but during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries its associations with the military and political authority of the Turks led to its adoption in the self-representations of regional rulers who were not ethnic Turks.[54] The use of the *qaba'* at the Ghaznavid court is attested by both wall paintings and portable luxury objects that undoubtedly circulated in the Islamic world and beyond. Images of the Turko-Persian modes of dress current at the Ghaznavid court were therefore available for the Buddhist ruler of a minor Himalayan kingdom to draw upon in his self-representations.[55]

In short, the available textual and visual evidence indicates that the employment of a *Turushka* craftsman in Kashmir in the second half of the eleventh century coincides with a moment when the cultural impact of the Ghaznavid sultanate was strongly felt in the Himalayan kingdoms to its northeast. One of the problems in conceptualising the relationship between these contiguous realms has been an anachronistic tendency to envisage them as possessed of boundaries analogous to those of the modern nation state. The rhetorical posturing of the medieval Arabic and Persian histories has tended to affirm this impression by reifying cultural and religious difference, depicting the boundaries between the eastern sultanates of the Dar al-Islam and the neighbouring kingdoms of al-Hind as a kind of medieval iron curtain. By contrast, the *Rajatarangini* suggests that the cultural, ethnic and religious boundaries between these realms were quite porous, permeable enough to permit the employment of a non-Hindu Turk in the embellishment of a royal Shiva temple.[56] In this sense, the evidence from the *Rajatarangini* suggests that the phenomenon of *ouvriers sans frontières*, which Anthony Cutler has recently discussed in relation to Byzantine–Islamic exchanges in the metalwork of the contemporary Mediterranean,[57] was also operative on the eastern frontier of the Dar al-Islam in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In fact, the phenomenon is especially

well attested in relation to metalworking technology; in addition to their numerous references to base-metal vessels circulating between Egypt, Arabia and southern India, the Cairo Geniza documents record the voyage of a trio of Jewish goldsmiths (one of whom hailed from the Maghrib) from Aden to Sri Lanka around 1130.[58] From such stray references, one gains the distinct impression that individuals with specific metallurgical skills were especially mobile around the Indian Ocean during exactly the period that an inlaid metalwork industry was emerging in Khurasan. The metallurgical innovation (or deception) associated with the peripatetic Turk of the *Rajatarangini* attests equally to the mobility of metalworking technology between western India and the neighbouring sultanates of Afghanistan by terrestrial means on the eve of the emergence of the Herati inlaid metalwork industry. That it was here rather than in any other region of the Islamic world that a technique long established in the contiguous regions of India emerged as dominant is hardly fortuitous. However, if Indian artisans or booty were in fact one of the causal factors, the evidence for the circulation of artefacts, artisans and techniques presented here suggests that this may well have been a two-way traffic.

NOTES

1 Ettinghausen 1943; Giuzalian 1968.
2 Jackson 2000; Kumar 2007; Flood 2009: 89–228.
3 Rice 1957a; Baer 1983: 204–7.
4 Allan 1976/77: 11; Allan 1979b: 65; Melikian-Chirvani 1982, nos 6–7; Allan 1996a: 369.
5 Allan 1976/77: 16.
6 Wilber 1939: 30–38.
7 Allan 1985b, no 255. Although it should be noted that the inlaid turquoise eyes associated with many of the Iranian figures are less common in Kashmir (where turquoise inlay is occasionally used for jewellery) than in Nepal and Tibet.
8 Pal 1975: 13.
9 Ward 1993: 73–74.
10 For a recent overview see Pal 2007.
11 Barrett 1962: 38, Pl. 24/6.
12 Reedy 1989: 103.
13 Pal 1975: 13, 30–31; Pal 1988: 24.
14 Unlike Bihar and Tamil Nadu, where copper alloy was the standard medium for metal sculpture, in Kashmir leaded brass (copper with at least 2 per cent zinc and 2 per cent lead) and brass (copper with added zinc) were the most favoured alloys; tin probably came from Afghanistan: Reedy 1989: 95–96. In addition, Kashmiri metalwork was almost

exclusively cast rather than beaten. The favoured medium in the medieval Islamic world was relatively pure brass (11–23 per cent zinc) with little or no tin and lead: Craddock et al. 1990: 77. In contrast to Khurasani metalwork, inscriptions are rare on Kashmiri metalwork.

15 Allan 1979b: 64–65, Fig. 3; Reedy 1989: 100, 103.

16 Reedy 1989: 104.

17 Davis 1997: 29, 64–65.

18 Barrett 1962: 38, 40, Pl. 25, Figs 10, 21–22. This had an inlaid golden *urna* unusual in Kashmir, where the *urna* was usually silver.

19 Bosworth 1994: 101, 105–6.

20 Ibn al-Zubayr, 1959: 45; al-Qaddumi 1996: 88; Flood 2009: 32–34.

21 Flood 2009: 32, Figs 8–9. The Nandi will appear in a forthcoming study of the Ghazni marbles by Dr Martina Rugiadi.

22 Flood 2009: 126–35.

23 Pal 1989: 79, 86.

24 Giuzalian 1968.

25 Goetz 1969: 133–34; Pal 1973: 743–44; Pal 1975: 37; Pal 1989: 80; Ohri 1989.

26 Khan 1985; Scerrato 1985.

27 Melikian-Chirvani 1982–83: 41.

28 Van Lohuizen 1981: 51, Pl. 13; Joshi 2007: 53, Fig. 16.

29 Ibn al-Zubayr 1959: 37; al-Qaddumi 1996: 83–84.

30 Flood 2009: 48–52.

31 Ward 1993: 74.

32 Flood 2009: 28–29.

33 Artusi 2009; Flood 2009: 189–203.

34 Pinder-Wilson 2001: 157.

35 Tye 1988.

36 Hangloo 1997.

37 Stein 1989–90, vol. I: 311.

38 Goepper 1991–92: 50.

39 The Pashupata Shaivites of Kashmir placed a particular emphasis on the *linga*: Pal 1973: 730.

40 Stuszkiewicz 1951–52; Ahmad 1977: 99; Wink 1992: 766–68; Prasad 1994; Chattopadhyaya 1998: 40–43.

41 *Rajatarangini* 7: 1149 in Stein 1989–90, vol. I: 357. See Talbot 1995: 701 for references to abstention from pork being a characteristic of *Turushka*s.

42 *Rajatarangini* 7: 1090–95 in Stein 1989–90, vol. I: 352–53.

43 Pal 1973: 743; Pal 1975: 42.

44 Barrett 1962: 41, Pls 21, 26.

45 Reedy 1989: 104.

46 Lo Bue 1981: 82–83; Pal 1988: 24; Oddy et al. 1981.

47 Pal 1994: no 30.

48 Melikian Chirvani 1985a: 92.

49 Allan 1979b: 11–13. Where it did appear, both mercury (fire) and cold gilding were used, despite the difficulties that leaded brass presents for fire-gilding/mercury gilding.

50 Khan 1986; Bamzai 2007: 308–9.

51 Hangloo 1997: 105; Wink 1992: 767.

52 *Rajatarangini* 7: 922–924 in Stein 1989–90, vol. I: 339.

53 Flood 2009: 65–72.

54 Soucek 1992.

55 Flood 2009: 65–67.

56 Sadly, the boundaries of contemporary scholarship are less fluid. Scholars who have mined the *Rajatarangini* as a source for the history of medieval Kashmiri metalwork and who have championed the role of Kashmiri sculpture in popularising inlaid metalwork in Khurasan have singularly failed to draw attention to the passage from the *Rajatarangini* that I have discussed, which goes unmentioned in the standard works on Kashmiri metalwork.

57 Cutler 1999.

58 Udovitch 2000: 689–91.

6

A TUBULAR BRONZE OBJECT FROM KHURASAN

LORENZ KORN

> And what have kings that privates have not too,
> Save ceremony, save general ceremony?
>
> Shakespeare, *The Life of Henry the Fifth*, IV, i

A bronze object recently acquired by the Bumiller Collection in Bamberg,[1] with a likely provenance from the eastern Iranian world (broadly speaking, the region identifiable with Khurasan), immediately catches the eye for its delicate workmanship and splendid decoration (Figs 6.1–6.4).[2] Its shape is that of a slightly conical tube, c.350mm in length. Both ends of the tube are open, measuring 17mm in width at the lower end and 52–60mm at the upper end. The object seems to have been slightly squeezed, at least there is a dent in the last quarter of the broader end, indicating that the shape of the object may have been influenced by some unforeseen force, perhaps when it was accidentally dropped.

The tube, weighing 267g, is cast from a copper alloy, the specific character of which still awaits scientific analysis. Particular features of its workmanship are the copper and silver inlays on the inscription bands at both ends, and the openwork (*ajouré*) which characterises the main section of the shaft. This openwork not only makes the object much lighter than it would be if the walls were solid, but also contributes significantly to its aesthetic appeal and makes it a masterpiece.

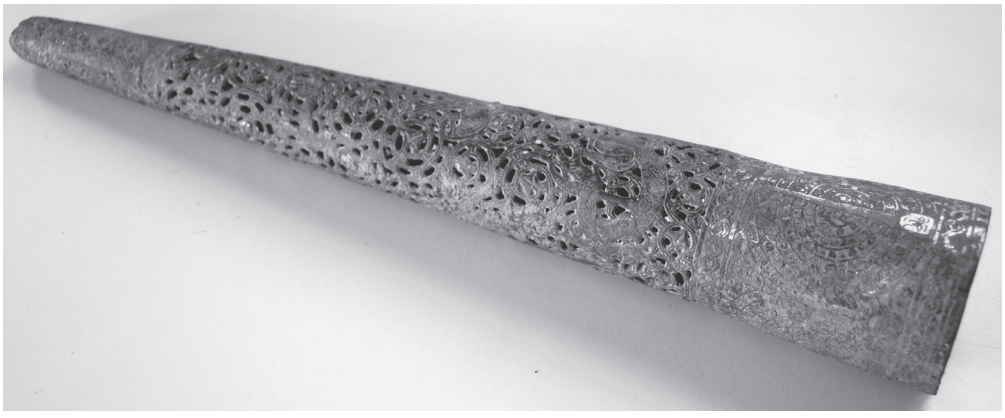

FIG. 6.1 Bumiller Collection, Bamberg (University Museum of Islamic Art) inv. no 5337. Photograph L. Korn.

Clearly the object has been deposited in the ground, and traces of hard-baked dirt still remain, along with the results of corrosion, a copper oxide of light green, overlaying a firm olive-black colour and some spots of reddish-brown patina. These traces leave little doubt about the authenticity of the object. In addition, it can be felt that the surface of the middle section of the tube has been polished by frequent handling. There is a clear sense of direction to the object, indicated by the arrangement of the animal representations on the shaft and the epigraphic bands at both ends: it was meant to be held, to be carried, or to stand upright, with the broader end uppermost. This feature appears crucial for the interpretation of the object and its possible use.

A clear hint to the region of origin and the date of the object is given by the motifs and style of the engraved, inlaid and openwork decoration. The openwork of the main section is characterised by the combination of animal representations with a background of scroll tendrils. The tendrils are organised in inward spirals which end in tripartite leaves in the centre, while the outside is studded with little leaves. Contours are underlined by an engraved central groove on the tendril. Tendrils of this kind are generally known from Khurasanian metalwork of the pre-Mongol period, while the central groove is not particularly frequent. It occurs on some cast bronzes and bronzes of hammered sheet metal from Khurasan and western Iran, datable to the period from the early thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.[3] Therefore this particular feature is unlikely to help with dating and attribution through style. By contrast, the casting technique with openwork is more indicative. It is typical of eleventh- to twelfth-century bronzes from Khurasan, among them incense-burners, lampstands and oil lamps.[4]

The epigraphic bands at both ends of the tube, again, show a design typical of Khurasanian metalwork: plaited bands of two strands accompany the frieze of scroll

tendrils underlying the letters of the inscription. Here, the tendrils form tight spirals of at least four (bottom) or six (upper end) turns, densely studded with schematic rounded leaves and an occasional blossom in between. The letters are of a strange mixture between cursive and angular, with squat lower parts and elongated upper ends bearing faces engraved into the silver inlay. This kind of 'talking head' (*redendes Naskhi*) appears in some of the Khurasan bronzes of the later twelfth to early thirteenth centuries, from the sphere of the late Ghaznavids and Ghurids.[5] It is usually found on objects of higher quality, which probably belonged to the wealthiest or even courtly households.

The inscriptions read: (bottom end) *al-ʿizz wa' l-iqbal* (power and good fortune); (upper end) *wa' l-saʿa / fiya wa' l-ALD* (feli[city and well]-being and…). The latter text appears, in its first half, as a conflation of the two words *wa' l-saʿada wa' l-ʿafiya*, like in so many inscriptions of good wishes in Khurasan bronzes. In its second half, it is hardly legible in its present state. Perhaps it can be interpreted as an abbreviated rendering of *al-dawla* (good luck).

The animal representations in the main part constitute a mixture of stylised naturalism and an imagined world (Figs 6.2–6.4). Their style is marked by clear and simple outlining, while shading, texture or anatomical details are indicated with small dots arranged in lines or clouds. On the lower register, a bird with a round head and a long tail with broad feathers can be seen. Given the sparse rendering of details, the identity of the bird represented is not totally clear: a dove cannot be excluded, but with regard to the long tail, a peacock seems more likely, although it lacks the crown. On the next level, a strange four-legged animal is depicted with long front legs and a long tail bent upwards above the back. It looks like a dog, except for the head, which has a wide-open beak. The third rank is occupied by a falcon (or other bird of prey), with sharply curved and pointed wings spread wide out. In the upper register appears a scene of two fighting animals: a feline (or a wolf?) is depicted sitting on the back of a goat or capricorn biting its neck. While the rendering of the heads and legs of the two animals

FIG. 6.2 Bumiller Collection, inv. no 5337, detail. Photograph L. Korn.

FIG. 6.3 Bumiller Collection, inv. no 5337; detail of lower section. Photograph L. Korn.

appears rather awkward, the general composition has been consciously arranged with the contrasting lines of the two bodies. It can be remarked that, with the exception of the bird in the lower register, which is elongated in a 2:3 ratio, all images are composed into a square, with regard to their height and width.

Likewise, the arrangement of the images appears intentional and well composed: there are 12 images in all, three of each kind in four registers. Directions change from one register to the next: while the fighting animals look right (from the beholder), the falcons have their heads turned left; the strange four-legged animals are walking to the right, whereas the peacocks are turned left again. The spacing between the representations varies slightly: two falcons nearly touch each other with the tips of their wings, but between two others there is a wider space. However, the overall arrangement is so regularly intermittent that a representation in one register stands above or below a gap in the neighbouring register. One should certainly not attach any particular meaning to this arrangement, but it testifies to the care which was spent on the design of the object.

While the general subject of animal representations, including animal fights, appears common in the decorations on medieval Islamic objects in general, and Khurasan bronzes in particular, there are no parallels known to this specific iconographic repertoire, and to this particular style. The features indicated by the characteristic dotting on the animal bodies would, in other examples of metalwork of the same period, usually be rendered by engraved strokes (for the shading of ribs in the flanks), hatching or punches.

The meaning of the images can be seen as a general circumscription of nobility and power. The animal fight as an age-old Oriental symbol of royal power clearly points in this direction, as well as the falcon with its association with princely pastimes. While the identity of the four-legged animal remains enigmatic and therefore no specific meaning can be attributed to it, the representation of the peacock might be directly connected with the function and purpose of the object.

From its shape, the tubular object was almost certainly designed to hold something which was put into the upper end. However, it was probably not used as a container

FIG. 6.4 Bumiller Collection, inv. no 5337; detail of upper section. Photograph L. Korn.

like those cylindrical tubes with covers, in which documents or other things could be transported safely. Nothing indicates that the upper opening was intended to be closed with a cover or lid. From the conical shape, one might consider the possibility of a trumpet or similar musical instrument, but the openwork speaks clearly against this. The most likely use seems that of a handle in which something was inserted, while the fragility of the openwork and the inlaid decoration excludes the possibility that it belonged to a tool or a weapon which was handled with significant force. Apart from these mere physical aspects, the ornamentation also points to its use in the uppermost stratum of society, possibly even a courtly context. Is it an obvious conclusion that it could have served as the handle of a flywhisk, perhaps with a bundle of peacock feathers? Is there, from the cultural environment of Khurasan in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, a possibility that flywhisks were used as luxury items or in a ceremonial way, which would justify a lavish decoration?

To my knowledge, no other flywhisks made of peacock feathers have been preserved from the pre-Mongol centuries in the Islamic world, although the flywhisk as such has been part of the cultural history of the Near and Middle East since ancient times.[6] From the practical point of view, flywhisks and fans could serve to keep flies away and to fan fresh air to a person in a hot climate. As royal insignia, they belonged to the iconography of the great kings of ancient Persia, as can be seen on the reliefs of Persepolis: on some reliefs in the door jambs of the palace of Xerxes, the great king is depicted standing with two servants behind, one of them carrying the royal parasol, the other with his arm raised and waving a flywhisk (Fig. 6.5). It consists of a shaft approximately one cubit long and two fingers in diameter, with a little profiled cup on top, from which a bundle of material, represented by parallel lines, rises and bends forward above the royal head. It is not quite clear of what material the upper part of the flywhisk is supposed to consist: from the rather straight, strictly parallel lines, it could

FIG. 6.5 Persepolis, door-jamb relief showing the great king with attendants holding the parasol and the flywhisk. Photograph L. Korn.

be a bunch of hair, possibly a horsetail; however, since the whole bundle stands upright, it seems more likely that feathers are intended. Whatever the material, it is clear that in the ceremonious appearance of the king depicted here the flywhisk belongs to the conspicuous insignia. It seems that the Persians had adopted it from Mesopotamia, since prototypes for the scene in question (but without the parasol) can be seen in relief orthostats from the Assyrian palace of Niniveh. Further west, the flywhisk enjoyed equal prestige as an attribute of dignity: as the *flabellum* was used in the Roman emperor cult and in Byzantine court ceremonial, it became a liturgical instrument in the early church, indicating reverence to the priest as well as to the sacrament.[7]

Ostrich feathers were more commonly used for *flabella* in the Mediterranean sphere, while peacock feathers were more frequent in the regions bordering the Indian Ocean. It is true that, because of the rich symbolism of immortality and paradise attached to the peacock in the Mediterranean world, its highly valued feathers were also used in various manners to convey these meanings; however, it is doubtful whether peacock feathers were used for fans or flywhisks in late antiquity and during the first centuries of Islam in the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, for the Umayyad period, the use of the *flabellum* in royal ceremonial is well attested: the wall painting in the main apse of the reception hall at Qusayr ʿAmra depicts an enthroned figure (probably the caliph) with two attendants

holding *flabella* with long shafts and feathers forming a fan. Al-Jahiz wrote that 'a caliph, or someone else in a comparable position of power and influence, used never to be without a slave girl standing behind him to wave fly whisk and fan, and another to hand him things, in a public audience in the presence of men.' [8] It seems that this practice was continued into later periods, since one of the paintings in the Cappella Palatina in Palermo shows a seated ruler with two attendants bearing fans: these *flabella* consist of a thin rod held with both hands, and a large leaf.[9] They are quite different from simple fans held in one hand, with a short stick to which a leaf of leather or stiff fabric was laterally attached, as depicted in the frontispiece of the *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa* dated 686/1287.[10] These fans were clearly less ceremonial and served practical purposes in everyday use. Again, another kind of flywhisk can be seen in the throne scene of the famous *Kitab al-Aghani* frontispiece: here, Badr al-Din Lu'lu' is frontally depicted on his folding seat, with a *velum* above his head held by two *genii*. One of the attendants at his side holds a stick from which a furry tail is suspended.[11] Clearly, in the context of this highly formalised representation, the object must be understood on the same level of symbolic representation as the *velum*, the throne or the weapon which the ruler is holding.

While these images, however rare, suggest that the use of flywhisks was understood as part of royal ceremonial far into the late Abbasid and Seljuk period, it seems that written sources convey little or no information about these insignia. The situation is somewhat different with other royal symbols, for example the parasol (*mizalla* or *chatr*). Like the flywhisk, the parasol as a sign of royal authority appears in Persepolis. While its use by the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs is not well attested, the Fatimid caliphs are known to have used it in their processions. In this tradition, the Mamluks inherited it, but called it *jitr* – an indication that, even in Egypt, the eastern origin might not have been completely forgotten.[12] The unbroken continuity of the use of ceremonial parasols (sometimes in combination with a sword – often sheathed in textile – carried behind the ruler) in the Islamic East is attested by numerous paintings from the Mongol, Safavid and Mughal period. In contrast, flywhisks are conspicuously absent from Mongol, Timurid or Safavid book painting.[13]

In India, the flywhisk has its own, longstanding tradition in religious and royal ceremonial. As in the climates of the Near East, or perhaps even more intensely, flywhisks and fans have developed from their practical purposes – stirring the air for a person is not a small service – to objects of complex cultural symbolism. An attendant with a fan or flywhisk can generally be interpreted as a sign of reverence towards the sacred or the beloved, which can be transferred to political authority.[14] One of the flywhisks commonly depicted was the *chauri*, at an early stage an attribute of Brahma. Usually, it consisted of a thin shaft approximately a forearm's length, with a little cup at the end that held a bundle of animal hair, a horse or yak tail. *Chauri* bearers are represented

in Indian sculpture from the Asokan period through the first millennium AD.[15] In India, *chauri*s were in use throughout the Mughal and colonial period, as demonstrated by the pair of *chauri*s formerly owned by Lord Curzon and now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.[16] In Mughal painting, the ruler is frequently shown in the company of an attendant waving a *chauri* at him. Thus, on a painting dated c.1620, the emperor Jahangir is depicted in a throne scene, seated cross-legged on his dais with a baldachin, holding a falcon on his right hand. Thirty-one courtiers are arranged at both sides in rows, and the person to whom the ruler's back is turned is waving over his head with a little *chauri*.[17] To what extent this was an obligatory attribute of the Mughal ruler is demonstrated by another seventeenth-century miniature which shows the emperor Babur in an entirely different setting, resting from a hunt in an open landscape next to a little river, again with his falcon placed in front of him. A richly clad courtier is standing behind the emperor, waving the *chauri* above his head.[18] The ceremonial character of the *chauri* is underlined by a miniature showing a prince of the late Mughal period at a hunt (Sangram Singh, *maharana* of Mewar, dated c.1720–30): the prince is riding his horse, with his entourage walking before and after him; servants carry his *huqqa* (from which the riding prince is smoking), a parasol, a fan and a *chauri*. The *chauri* is being waved behind the back of the prince, for the servant is not able to reach higher.[19]

A different kind of flywhisk, made of a bundle of peacock feathers, is known in India under the name of *morachhal*. In Mughal paintings depicting courtly scenes it appears less frequently than the *chauri*, but there are a number of late Mughal miniatures which make it abundantly clear that the *morachhal* belonged to the same sphere and was similarly used. It appears in the hands of a courtier standing behind the enthroned Mughal ruler, on the same level as other regalia such as the *chatr*; or in the hands of female servants attending noblemen and ladies, either in receptions or in more informal gatherings.[20] In an eighteenth-century miniature depicting a ruler seated on the terrace of a palace and enjoying entertainment by dancers, the two servants behind him are carrying a *chauri* and a *morachhal* (Plate 3).[21] The peacock feathers of the *morachhal* are held together by the shaft, which is handled at its lower end. It is tubular, slightly tapering downwards, and approximately one cubit long; its decoration – rows of jewels in this case – is arranged in four registers. Thus the *morachhal* resembles quite closely the tubular bronze object described above, and it can be assumed with a high degree of certainty that this object was used as a ceremonial flywhisk.

It should be noted that in Indian tradition the *morachhal* does not belong only to the sphere of the ruler, but that its symbolism of authority, or reverence to authority and veneration of sanctity, belongs equally to the religious sphere. Consequently, living Sufi saints as well as their tombs are fanned, and '… peacock feather fans are most prominently used at the shrines of Muslim saints in India and Pakistan where they

symbolise the presence of possessors of spiritual power.'[22] This practice is also mirrored in miniature painting, even if the sphere of Sufis was less frequently depicted than the sphere of the court. A miniature showing five ascetics gathered in front of a hut, dating from the eighteenth century, shows two of them with *morachhal*s with short handles, which they have put down at their side.[23]

Similarly, a painting depicting a hermit (perhaps of noble origin) seated in front of his hut, in the company of an old ascetic and a young attendant shows two *morachhal*s: one is used by the attendant to fan the hermit, the other, smaller one, is lying in front of the hermit, who has probably put it down after using it in a ceremonial way.[24] That the *morachhal*s were not only used to fan living persons but also shrines is made clear by a Rajput painting depicting Raja Siddh Sen as he venerates a *lingam*, where a *morachhal* can be seen among the objects lying in front of the Raja.[25] A servant carrying a *morachhal* appears in a scene representing an Indian temple in a sixteenth-century miniature which was painted over in a Mughal court workshop c.1605–8.[26] While the painted examples date fairly late, it seems impossible to determine when the use of *morachhal*s became part of the material culture of Islam in India. A likely assumption would be that it was inspired by pre-Islamic Indian cults soon after the Muslim conquests, when Sufi activities took hold on the subcontinent and were deeply influenced by Indian religious practices.

How and when the *morachhal* was adopted in the sphere of eastern Iran remains still more uncertain. No pictorial representations of *morachhal*s are known from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, when the northern parts of India were subjugated by the Ghaznavids and Ghurids. In his report from a reception at the Ghaznavid court, al-Bayhaqi describes the throne of the sultan, fitted with jewels and costly textiles, a hanging crown under which the sultan was seated, and attendants wearing maces, but neither a parasol nor fans or flywhisks.[27] However, in a different place, Bosworth mentions on the basis of nearly contemporary chronicles that the Ghurid ruler 'Ala' al-Din Husayn (Jahansuz) adopted the use of the *chatr* together with title of sultan, after the sack of Ghazni in 545/1150–51.[28] No flywhisk appears in this context either, but the mentioning of the *chatr* strengthens the possibility that the Ghaznavid court, from which parts of northern India were ruled and which was generally open to influences from Indian culture, also made use of the *morachhal* as part of the royal insignia.

In a recent book, Finbarr Barry Flood has extensively discussed the ways in which Indian elements were integrated into the Muslim culture of the Ghaznavid and Ghurid conquerors, and vice versa.[29] He interprets examples from various media as testimony of a mutual process of acculturation between the governors and the governed. Even the outwardly simple act of transporting booty from the Indus valley to Ghazni implied more than a displacing or removal of objects; it can be seen as an integration of new

meaning into the palace of the sultan. The exchange of goods which were produced in either or both spheres marked an early stage in a sequence of interaction which gradually intensified. In the course of this, the adoption of iconographical and symbolic elements, and their integration into new cultural entities, could follow at a later stage.

To conclude, it seems justified to understand the tubular object as a ceremonial flywhisk derived from, or related to, a *morachhal*. It is an early material relic of the cultural relations between Khurasan and northern India. While the ceremonial use of objects like the one presented here is attested for the ancient Near and Middle East, as part of the iconography of the ruler, the visual evidence comes overwhelmingly from India from the seventeenth century onwards, and is connected with the ceremonial of worldly rulers as well as the veneration of Sufi saints. The chronological gap between the Achaemenids and the Mughals has to be closed somehow, and it would seem appropriate to relate the object under discussion to the period of Muslim expansion in northern India. It can be assumed that our tubular object originated from a situation marked by a creative encounter of cultures, when close cultural relationships were developing between the Muslim conquerors, their newly conquered subjects, courtiers of the Ghurid sultans, and perhaps founders of Sufi communities, somewhere in the area between Delhi and Nishapur. Consequently, the object can be taken as a testimony for the existence of *morachhal*s in the Indian context which would have served as prototypes, far earlier than the preserved pictorial representations. From its material and technique, however, it seems likely that it was made in the homeland of the conquerors, where the bronze and brass workshops had a longstanding tradition. Finally, the object can be seen as an example of failed return: the ceremonial use of the flywhisk had obviously been part of Iranian court culture 1700 years before the Ghurids, but its reintroduction from India did not last beyond the Mongol conquest, and the Iranian rulers of the Timurid and Safavid period adopted other insignia meant to symbolise their authority and legitimacy.

NOTES

1 It would be unnecessary to emphasise James Allan's role in scholarly research on Iranian bronzes. His classes in the Ashmolean Museum, where bronzes could be handled on some occasions, constitute a vivid memory (including the unforgettable smell of the Reitlinger Room). It is my pleasure to thank Werner Grub for his hospitality in North London during the air-traffic standstill in April 2010, which enabled me to finish the manuscript of the present article in a warm and productive atmosphere. I am also gratefully obliged to Jangar Ilyasov, who critically accompanied the different stages of research and gave the manuscript a critical reading during his stay in Bamberg.

2 Bumiller Collection (Universitätsmuseum für Islamische Kunst), inv. no BC5337.

3 Melikian-Chirvani 1982: 119–20, 214–20, Figs 46, 99–101.

4 Cf. for example Kalter 1993: 86–87, Fig. 86; Rogers 2009: 88–90, nos 95–98.

5 Cf. the famous Bobrinsky bucket of 559/1163 in the Hermitage, the pen-case signed by Shadhi of Herat, dated 607/1210, in the Freer Gallery of Art, and another pen-case with the same signature; cf. Herzfeld 1936; Ettinghausen 1943; Melikian-Chirvani 1982: 72, Figs 40–41.

6 For the ceremonial use of flywhisks throughout ancient Mediterranean cultures, both Christian and Islamic, cf. Green 2006, esp. 33–34, 59–64. I am gratefully obliged to Jürgen W. Frembgen for drawing my attention to this important contribution.

7 Green 2006: 33, 43–45.

8 Jahiz, *Risalat al-qiyan*, transl. Beeston 1980: 20 (also quoted in Fowden 2004: 118–19); in the Arabic text (Arab. part p. 8, no 20), the relevant expression is *jariyatun tudhibbu 'anhu fa-turawwihuhu*.

9 Cappella Palatina A 23.6, illus. Grube and Johns 2005: 133, Fig. 24.4, 80, Pl. 44.

10 Istanbul, Süleymaniye Esad Efendi 3638, fol. 4 r., illus. Ettinghausen 1962: 98.

11 Istanbul, Millet Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah Efendi 1566, fol. 1 r., illus. Ettinghausen 1962: 65.

12 Bosworth and Holt, 'Mizalla' (EI^2). For the Fatimid insignia, cf. Halm 1995.

13 For the Mongol period, cf. the throne scenes of the Diez albums (Diez A fol. 70, pp. 5, 10, 11, 20, 21, 22, 23, fol. 71, p. 47), illus. *Dschingis Khan und seine Erben* 2005: 257–63, nos 285–90); the silk carpet roundel in the David Collection, inv. no 30/1995, illus. Folsach 2007: 23, Fig. 2; scenes from Great Mongol *Shahnama*, Vever Collection, Paris and Louvre, Paris, inv. no 7096, illus. Grabar and Blair 1980: 85, no 14; 113, no 28. The numerous examples from the later periods would exceed the space available in the present article.

14 Frembgen 2010.

15 Cf. the lifesize female figure in the Patna Museum, dated c.200 BC.

16 Victoria and Albert Museum inv. no IM.255–1927, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O147905/chauri-holder/.

17 Copenhagen, David Collection 20/1979, illus. Folsach 2007: 188, no 102.

18 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, illus. Kalter 1993: 94, Fig. 98.

19 Khalili Collection MSS 965, illus. Rogers 2009: 206, no 342.

20 Copenhagen, David Collection 26/1982, 38/1980, 46/1980; illus. Folsach 2007: 196, no 109; 198, no 111; 226, no 129; Khalili Coll. MSS 1067, illus. Rogers 2009: 287, no 31.

21 Copenhagen, David Collection D16/1994.

22 Frembgen 2010.

23 Copenhagen, David Collection 75/2007.

24 Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst SMB, inv. no J.4594, fol. 1 (the miniature was on display in the temporary exhibition: *Ein indischer Aristokrat: Antoine-Louis Henri de Polier und seine Sammelalben*, 2010).

25 Crill and Jariwala 2010: 136–37, no 44.

26 Cambridge MA, Fogg Art Museum; cf. Das 1994: 148–49.

27 Translated by Bosworth 1973: 135–37.

28 Bosworth, 'Ghurids' (EI²), with reference to Ibn al-Athir; cf. also Flood 2009: 94, quoting Bosworth. I have been unable to locate the relevant passage in Ibn al-Athir's *Kamil*, where the reports on the Ghurid campaigns against Ghazni, Herat and Lahore are concentrated *sub annis* 543, 545 and 54AH.

29 Flood 2009.

7

PERSIANS ABROAD: THE CASE OF THE JAMI' MASJID OF GULBARGA

ROBERT HILLENBRAND

INTRODUCTION

The Jami' Masjid, or Friday Mosque, of Gulbarga in the Deccan,[1] built by the Bahmani monarch Muhammad I (r.1358–75) in 769/1367,[2] but perhaps later modified,[3] has of late achieved well-nigh iconic status among Islamic architectural historians. It owes this special position not to frequent visits by specialists or lengthy discussion in the scholarly literature, since it has received neither of these markers of importance. Instead, the key element in its rise to fame has been a single and often-republished image, namely a view of one or other of its side aisles with its dramatic transverse vaulting (Fig. 7.1). This sequence of ten arches in echelon, each one tucked into the one in front of it in steadily diminishing perspective, finds its natural vanishing point in the twin windows at the far end, which give out onto the landscape beyond. With their Promethean piers, improbably low springing, huge span, strongly marked stilt at the haunch with a crisp return and slightly ogee apex, these are arches not quickly forgotten, and indeed this justly famous view readily qualifies as a textbook example of architects' architecture.

This article extends well beyond these somewhat over-exposed aisles, and will focus principally on the analysis of the mosque itself.[4] This analysis comprises four categories: the exterior; the concept of this mosque as totally enclosed; spatial factors; and the treatment of the dome chamber. It will end with a brief look at the long reach of Persian culture in the medieval Deccan and at the broader regional context of the building.[5]

FIG. 7.1 Gulbarga, Jami' Masjid, outer aisle.

THE EXTERIOR

First, then, the treatment of the exterior (Fig. 7.2). The mosque crowns a gentle hill, and is thus visible from afar, indeed even from across the lake. Like some other Friday mosques of the region, such as those of Daulatabad[6] or Golconda for example,[7] it is located within a strongly fortified royal precinct, with the fort of Bala Hisar only a couple of hundred metres away.[8] The mosque has a modest rather than a monumental aspect, with low stilted domes accentuating the corners and a splendidly isolated big dome singling out the *mihrab* bay. This use of domes of various sizes as agents of articulation does have earlier Islamic parallels, as in the Aghlabid *jami'*s of Kairouan and Tunis and the mosque of al-Hakim in Fatimid Cairo,[9] but was not widely employed until the fifteenth century, when it became a trademark of Ottoman architecture. The mosque rests on a diminutive platform which substantially extends the perimeter of the building on three sides. Various ruined remains surround it, and a later low, two-storey rectangular structure projects from its south side.

The hilltop site of the mosque means that, for the most part, one experiences the exterior of the building either from afar or from below – never from above. From close

to, the perimeter merlons at roof level cut off practically all sight of the drums on which the lesser domes rest. This has the effect of reducing their impact. Except from the air, they can never be seen all at once. And this means that their role as markers of the mosque's periphery is not fully realised.

On three of its four sides the mosque is strikingly open, with the solid walls replaced by rows of windows. This repetitive fenestration, like the vistas that open within, serves to underline the sheer scale of the building, but it also integrates the mosque with its surroundings in the most natural fashion. On the north and south sides an accent above the fourth and eighth opening breaks the regular rhythm. This comprises a blank and flat rectangular panel with miniature baluster or vase-shaped columns at its two upper corners separated by a trio of merlons. Similar dwarf columns or turrets festoon the roofscape at key points, but are essentially too small and spindly to operate as anything more than a garnish to the architecture itself.

The external lighting is not uniform. Most of the external fenestration comprises full-scale open arcades. But the change of pace and scale represented by the outer aisles finds its reflection on the exterior too, for the paired arcades that correspond to the end of each aisle are not fully open like the rest of the arcades, though their height and breadth are the same. Instead, their upper part is blind and the arched opening itself is about half the height of the rest of the arcade – a very marked change in rhythm, which is signalled inside the mosque by the relative dimness of the corners. These arcades make themselves still more strongly felt in the mosque's interior by virtue of the

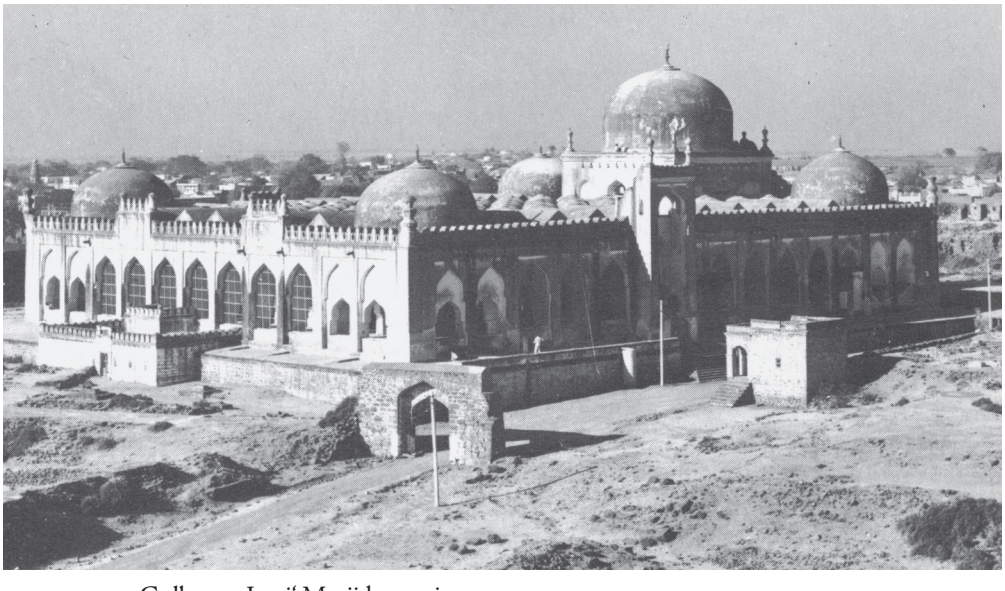

FIG. 7.2 Gulbarga, Jami' Masjid, exterior.

patterning of light and shade which they project onto the floor, and which changes with the movement of the sun. The *qibla* area is dim in comparison.

The west façade alone, which constitutes the back wall of the *qibla*, is plain and unbroken, except for six small windows and a central superstructure in the form of a truncated stepped pyramid. This ugly accretion dramatically breaks the line of the wall but softens the otherwise abrupt transition between the outer wall and the high drum on which the great dome rests. It also serves to conceal that dome. The absence of applied decoration on this exterior as a whole is noteworthy. There is no minaret, and no contemporary minbar survives.

AN ENCLOSED MOSQUE WITH NO COURTYARD

What of the design and execution of the mosque as a whole? The ground plan (Fig. 7.4) is rectangular rather than square, and this is slightly strange given that on three sides the same formula is adopted, namely a wide cordon enclosing the heart of the mosque and spanned by transverse vaults ending at each corner with a dome. The elevation (Fig. 7.3) features seven open arched windows on the east façade and ten on the north and south façades. An asymmetrically placed portal, reached by a flight of steps, is on the north side, not situated opposite the *qibla*, where it would have created an axial emphasis.

Pride of place, however, must go to the concept of this mosque as a large, entirely enclosed space, with no attached courtyard. The Gulbarga *jami'* has the distinction of being the only mosque in the subcontinent which is totally covered.[10] Many variations on this theme can be found throughout the Islamic world. At their simplest such mosques are small squares with a flat, usually wooden, roof. Of the more elaborate types, the

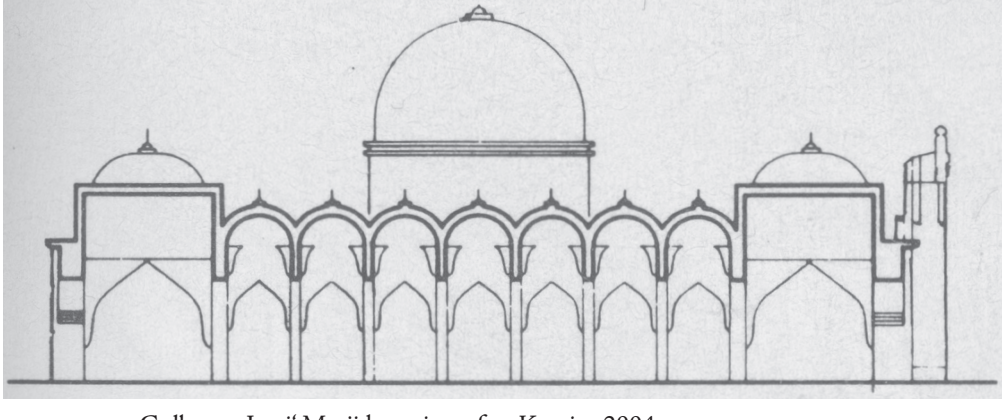

FIG. 7.3 Gulbarga, Jami' Masjid, section, after Kamiya 2004.

commonest is the so-called nine-dome mosque, a genre found from Spain to India.[11] Yet all of these buildings, as befits their relatively modest scale, function as *masjid*s rather than as Friday mosques. For the latter category, Islamic tradition prescribed a courtyard, not least as an overflow space in case the covered area proved too small to accommodate all the congregation gathered together for the Friday service.

Seen from this perspective, then, the Gulbarga *jami'* took the model of a small mosque and – against all precedent – inflated it to gigantic size, measuring as it does some 66 by 52m and employing not nine but 75 diminutive domes plus five bigger ones. Thus an intrinsically familiar design is turned on its head by mere dint of enlargement and repetition, and in the process a new kind of architectural space is created. One may ask why this decision was taken. Neither the demands of climate nor those of ritual can explain it. Nor do considerations of topography arise. While there is a fairly steep slope to the south, the terrain to the west and north is level enough. Thus the site could easily have accommodated a small courtyard to the east or a much larger one to the north. The reason for this innovative design, then, seems to lie not in any practical consideration but rather to boil down to an aesthetic preference.

And the idea was not taken up seriously by later architects, though two partially covered mosques in Delhi, the Kalan Masjid of 1370[12] and the Khirki Masjid of 1375,

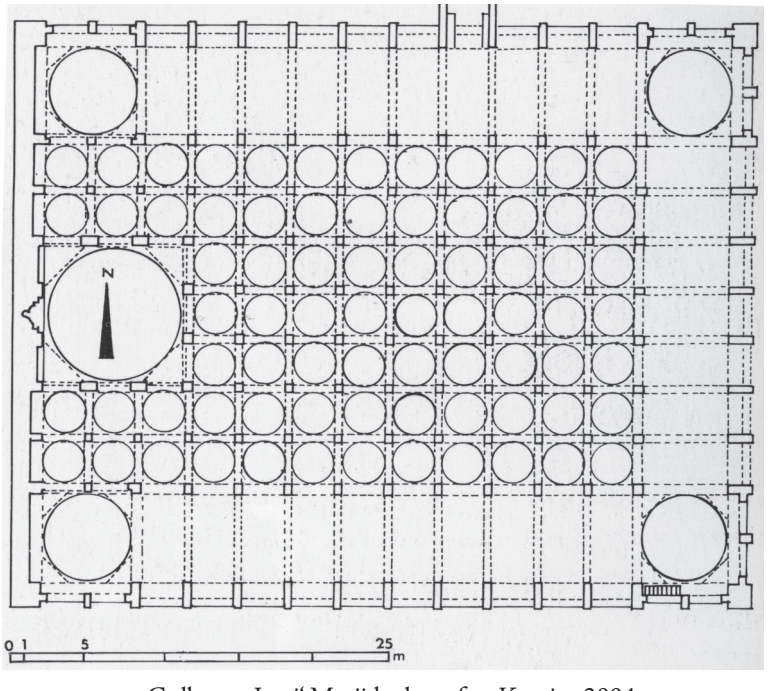

FIG. 7.4 Gulbarga, Jami' Masjid, plan, after Kamiya 2004.

are close enough in time to the Gulbarga *jami'* for their architects to have drawn inspiration from it. The Khirki Masjid is especially notable for its austere rejection of ornament and for the way that, like the Gulbarga *jami'*, it privileges the interior at the expense of the exterior.[13] In detail, however, it diverges from its Deccani counterpart in that its interior layout features four diminutive raised open courtyards grouped around the pillared sanctuary, plus four strongly projecting square portals on the main axes. The fact that several mosques of unprecedented originality were built in quite separate parts of India in the same decade underlines the dynamic and innovative nature of Islamic religious architecture in late medieval India.[14] In this respect India stands out from the rest of the Islamic world at this time.

Nevertheless, one maverick factor might perhaps be taken into account, namely that the design was entrusted to an architect of foreign extraction; the foundation inscription identifies him as Rafi' b. Shams b. Mansur of Qazvin.[15] It is crystal clear that Persians were able to serve as arbiters of taste in the Deccan in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the impact of their architecture there has long been acknowledged.[16] One might argue further that an Iranian with the energy, boldness and self-confidence to seek his fortune so far from home is likely enough to have had the independence of mind to devise an original design and, thanks to the cultural authority that he would have been able to wield,[17] would have been in a good position to argue in favour of his design being adopted. Paradoxically enough, he would probably have been better placed to realise a pioneering design in the Deccan than at home. Bold he certainly was, for he had the nerve to execute in the unfamiliar material of stone a design solidly grounded in the millennial Iranian tradition of brick vaulting.

SPATIAL FACTORS

How well, then, does this revolutionary design, with its phalanxes of domes, work out in practice? It must be noted at the outset that, far from being repetitive, the design is curiously elastic, for the visitor to the mosque never encounters the same spatial experience for long. Even within the main body of small domes, the slightest movement triggers a change in spatial perception, like moving a single notch in the shifting planes of a kaleidoscope. The intersecting volumes of the vaulting just above head level create diagonal pathways that seem to stretch away further than they actually do (Plate 4). These vistas are stepped or staggered, and thus invite the eye to follow them to the end. The living three-dimensional geometry of this interior, whose height is carefully calibrated to work on a human scale, is further modulated by the gentle play of light and shade which the broad outer aisles guarantee.

It is perhaps this mobile quality of light and shade that has evoked for some[18] the admittedly similar spatial effects of the Great Mosque of Córdoba, and this in turn has spawned the absurd guide-book cliché that a Moorish architect was responsible for the Gulbarga *jami'*. Moorish architects in 1367 would have had a hard time finding work outside Granada. Technically and structurally, of course, Córdoba is different in every respect: its main interior roofing is pitched, not vaulted, and is supported by a unique system of piers braced by strainer arches and resting on columns. That said, the labyrinthine hall-of-mirrors impression created by the Córdoba interior[19] does find a somewhat subdued counterpart at Gulbarga.

Yet while the central experience generated by the core interior of the Gulbarga *jami'*, an experience which impinges on the visitor from all sides, operates on a comfortably human scale, that is by no means all that is on offer. For at strategic intervals space expands in both height and breadth as one spatial unit flows seamlessly into a larger and then still larger one, which in ascending order of scale are the outer aisles, the corner domes and the great dome over the *mihrab*, at the centre of the *qibla* wall. The spatial interplay between the small modular domes, the aisles and the corner domes works by gentle stages and thus is relatively gradual. But since the great central dome is girdled on all three sides by small domes, the transition here is much more dramatic and powerful. It could well be that this contrast is entirely deliberate, and it might be worth noting that such stark juxtapositions of small and huge spatial volumes – which are always arresting to experience – are standard practice in Seljuk and Ilkhanid architecture in Iran.[20]

An extensive but not lofty covered space closed off by solid walls has the attendant disadvantages of poor lighting and ventilation and, for some, an uncomfortably cramped, even potentially claustrophobic, feeling. The Gulbarga *jami'* avoids all these problems by the simple expedient of treating the outer aisles differently from the main body of the mosque. Not only are they double the width of the other bays; they are also much higher and, crucially, their outer perimeter is not a solid wall but a series of 12 arched openings. Thus on three sides the mosque is open to the elements, amply ventilated and flooded with light. It is a bold stroke and one well suited to the local climate, which is hot and dry for most of the year. It is not a solution which could so readily have been adopted in the severer climate of, say, Iran or Turkey. This fenestration works both for those inside looking out and for those outside looking in. It is possible that this very unusual openness of design derives from the location of the mosque, inside the fort which was the centre and seat of royal power, with the city proper located outside the fort and well to the east, and with a further and smaller settlement to the north, the latter also provided with a mosque. Thus – to judge by its site – the Gulbarga *jami'* served the court rather than the community at large, and things foreign were held in high esteem at court at the time.

THE MAIN DOME CHAMBER

A brief glance at the ground plan is enough to show that the purpose of the nine open arches in this domed chamber was to integrate it with the rest of the sanctuary, and this aim is successfully achieved. Here again Iranian parallels come readily to mind, notably the great Saljuq domed chambers of the Isfahan school surrounded on three sides by multiple domed or vaulted bays. These form a U-shaped belt around each of the major dome chambers.[21]

The most notable feature of this interior is that effectively it is a four-storey rather than a three-storey elevation, and that the balance between the component parts is also unusual (Fig. 7.5). The basic layout of the lower elevation of this chamber is simple: three large arches per side below and three smaller ones above. The lower arches are all open, except on the *qibla* side, where each is provided with a window of two lights. The central window over the elaborate trilobed *mihrab* with its scalloped interior has its exact counterpart in the zone of transition, though it is noticeable that this window is tiny in comparison with the central open arches equally spaced around the octagon.

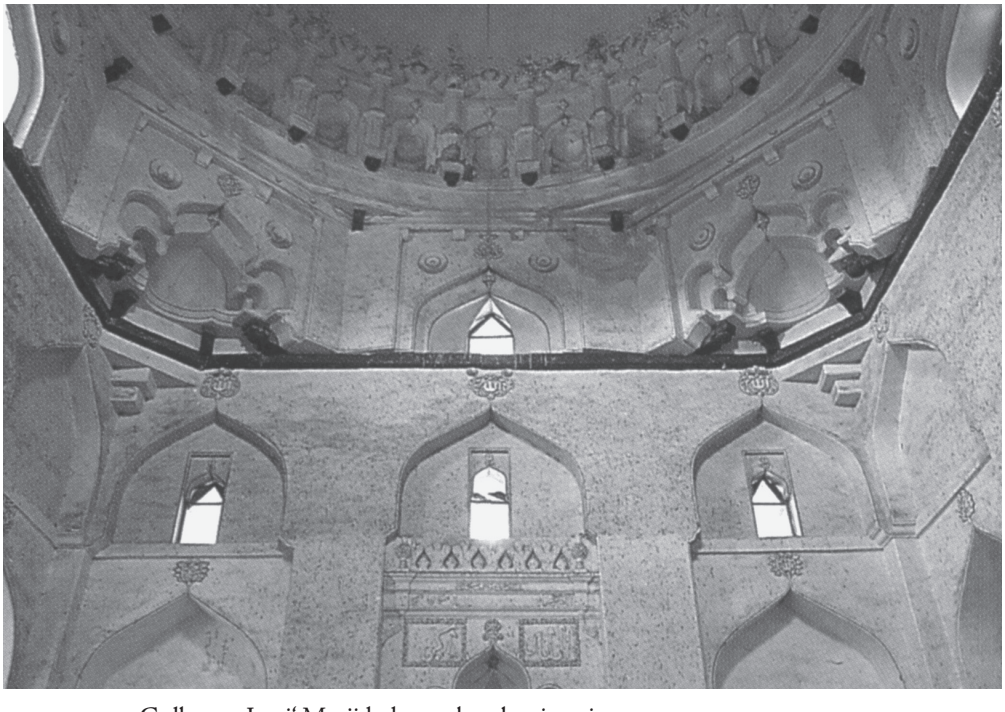

FIG. 7.5 Gulbarga, Jami' Masjid, dome chamber interior.

But perhaps the overriding aim here was to single out the *qibla* side, and this is certainly achieved in most of the elevation.

The lower elevation has its own distinctive character. Thus its lighting is uneven, thanks to the curiously random distribution of the windows. As usual, the best-lit wall of the lower part of the chamber is the *qibla* side. Another unusual feature, briefly mentioned above, is the extra tier sandwiched between the crowns of the 12 major arches and the zone of transition proper, and comprising simply an additional arched and recessed tympanum above the apex of each major arch. These tympana are all blind except for the three on the *qibla* wall, each of which has a central arched window in a rectangular frame. This extra and somewhat otiose tier, effectively a prelude to the transition zone, already incorporates a bridging feature, namely a modest bevel at the top of each corner directly below the centre of each squinch. This bevel comprises a lintel supported on two triangular corbels.

This dome chamber, like some of the Bahmanid royal tombs nearby, such as that of Firuz Shah, polyglot linguist and lecher,[22] is by no means an entirely local product. The almost keel-shaped arch brings Fatimid Cairo to mind, while the squat low dome has Tughluqid parallels, and indeed by 1329 Muhammad b. Tughluq had shifted his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad in the Deccan, not far from Gulbarga.[23] Even so, no close Tughluqid parallel for the Gulbarga dome chamber, whether in Delhi, Multan or elsewhere, presents itself.[24] Thus neither connection goes very far, and the ensemble is better understood as a free variation on the Iranian type of late Seljuk or Ilkhanid times, moderated by some Indo-Islamic features.

THE ZONE OF TRANSITION

In its use of a developed zone of transition set between the domed chamber below and the dome above (Plate 4),[25] the Gulbarga *jami'* follows a formula employed by Islamic fourteenth-century architects as far west as Egypt. But its local stamp prevails over any foreign borrowing. Two key details are relevant here: the presence of lobes in the main squinch arches, and the highly developed 24-sided zone above, in which lobes also play their part. In their different ways both of these features break new ground. The lobes of the squinch are unusual in that, rather clumsily, they adjoin the main arch rather than opening out from it. This awkwardness is compounded by the somewhat empty flurry of business around the base of the squinch. Too much is going on and too little of it is structurally relevant.

Moreover, a silent and undeclared war is going on between the age-old Indian tradition of using the corbel as the basic bridging device and the Iranian tradition of

using a true arch, and indeed a full-scale zone of transition, for the same purpose. Each of these solutions has its own distinctive character, and to combine them in a single composition is infelicitous. The farrago of bridging devices on display suggests that the architect felt that the squinch was not quite enough. This belt-and-braces approach could be interpreted as an attempt to reconcile two irreconcilable methods of solving a structural problem. The attempt was of course destined to fail, precisely because it was a compromise. Each tradition is realised in a half-hearted way. Small wonder that the effect is uneasy and uncomfortable.

The principal 'mistake', so to speak, is that the squinch arches are too small to assert themselves properly in the zone of transition. An uncomfortably large empty space is left on either side of the rectangular frame, though a roundel in each spandrel helps to fill the gap. So the squinch zone is parcelled out between three competing elements: the lobed squinches, the axial arches and the blank walls between them. Had the architect allotted a bolder role to the arches in the zone of transition, that zone would have played a more active role in the elevation. That said, the squinches do draw the eye, despite their diminutive scale, because of all that is going on within and around them.

A more successful blend of the two incompatible ways of seeing is used in the supports of the 75 minor domes, where the form is that of a pendentive, while its execution takes the form of ten rows of triangular corbels. These create lozenges of alternating light and dark tones. These corbelled pendentives, as they might paradoxically be termed, occur both on a small scale in the multiple domes and in much larger format as supports of the corner domes.

The 24-sided zone – a sequence of arches in rectilinear frames – is no less unusual and innovative. Here too spots of deep shadow punctuate the elevation. Here too each frame is far higher than the blind arch it encloses. The upper termination of the frame is not a horizontal moulding but rather – again – a trilobed motif.[26] No moulding closes off the upper part of the 24-sided zone, so these trilobed motifs simply merge into the inner surfaces of the dome. But perhaps the most curious aspect of this upper zone is the choice of 24 divisions instead of the standard 16. The hexadecagon is the most obvious and logical way of emphasising that the upper level of the transition zone is approaching the circular base of the dome. It is geometrically satisfying at a glance. A 24-sided zone, however, makes no such obvious sense. Here it looks top-heavy, and its unusual articulation is entirely unrelated to that of the squinch zone below.

THE PERSIAN CONNECTION

From 1347 the ruling power in the Deccan was the Persian adventurer 'Ala' al-Din Bahman Shah, who claimed descent from the *Shahnama* hero Isfandiyar, gave his name to a dynasty that endured until 1528, and was the first in the subcontinent to exchange embassies with the Ottomans.[27] The wholesale migration of Iranians to the Deccan under Bahmanid rule[28] profoundly affected the local culture. Scholars from Arabia, Iran and Central Asia flocked to Gulbarga, the Bahmanid capital. Persian, not Arabic, was the language of high culture at the court, where Persian poets performed and where the *Shahnama* was read and Nauruz celebrated by rulers who called themselves shahs. Persian viziers like Fadlallah Inju and the Shirazi Mahmud Gawan (d.1481) directed state affairs. The latter corresponded with the great and the good of his time, including Jami, Husain Bayqara, Khwaja Ahrar and Mehmet II.[29] He also founded India's only four-*iwan* madrasa in Bidar. It recalls that of Khargird, itself built by a Shirazi.[30] The immigrants, known as *afaqi*s, regularly clashed with the local *dakhni*s, and this conflict eventually destroyed the dynasty. Not surprisingly, local architecture saw a wholesale recycling of Iranian forms, their medium being Indian stone rather than Persian brick; and there are solecisms galore.[31] The aisles at Gulbarga belong with the transverse vaults of the *jami'*s of Isfahan, Tabriz, Yazd and Abarquh, and of Khan Mirjan in Baghdad. True, Iranian polychrome tile mosaic sits oddly with black stone, let alone the fiery hues of sandstone. But Persian masters signed their work in the Deccan,[32] as they did elsewhere in India,[33] Persian inscriptions recur from Mandu[34] to Bijapur,[35] and Persian motifs were widely used.[36] The prevalence of clusters of mausolea at Golconda, Bidar and Gulbarga among other Deccani sites finds Persian parallels at Amul, Qum and Samarqand. Other Persian imports include zones of transition, bulbous domes, high drums, minarets and certain genres of palace and mausoleum. But this is a topic worthy of a doctorate.

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Gulbarga *jami'* takes its place alongside other buildings of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries in the Deccan, of which those of Golconda, Bidar and Bijapur, especially the *jami'*s, are the most celebrated. The *leitmotif* of this local school is an aesthetic of austerity, which articulates buildings by architectonic means. These spacious, vaulted and largely undecorated interiors with a multitude of domes carried on kite-shaped pendentives are compelling in their simplicity and contained power. This

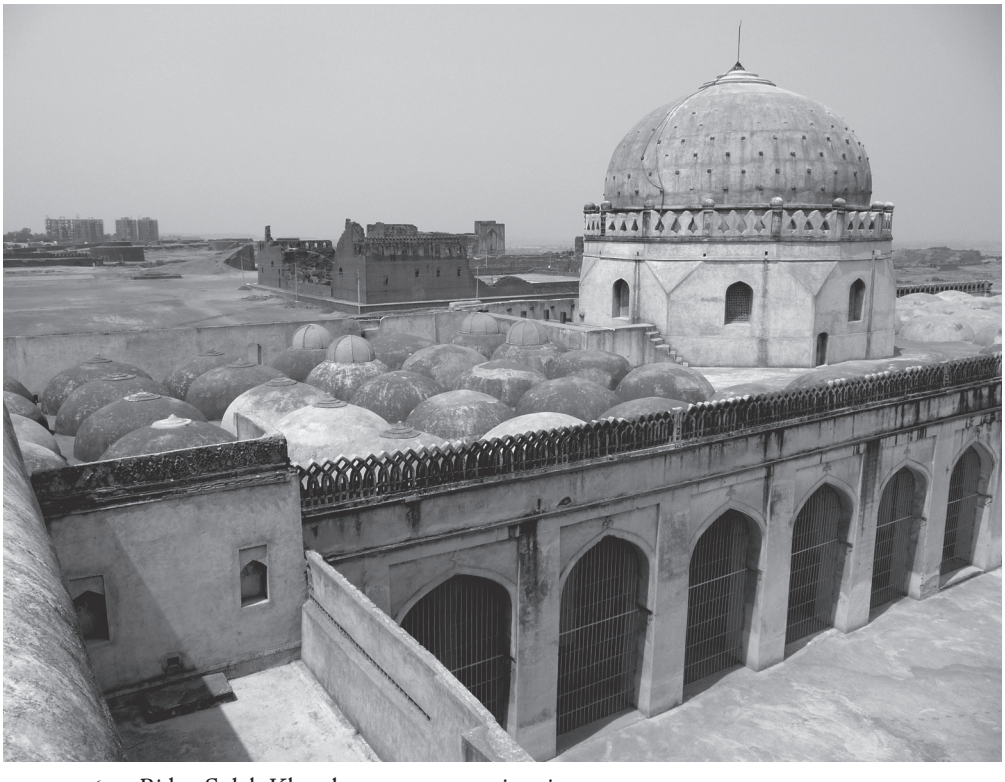

FIG. 7.6 Bidar, Solah Khamba mosque, exterior view.

fashion lasted in Bijapur into the time of the 'Adil Shahs. Key examples of this Deccani school include the *jami'*s just listed; the mosques of Shah Bazar in Gulbarga, Langar Ki nearby, and Solah Khamba in Bidar (Fig. 7.6); tombs at Golconda, Holkonda, Gulbarga and Bidar; and various buildings at Firuzabad. Typical markers of this school are an open generous setting that allows much or all of the monument to be seen in the round; a richly arcaded façade; a multiplicity of small domes; trilobed *mihrab*s; pendentives; ogee arches in echelon or in multiple recession; and – at over a score of sites – some of the most extraordinarily impressive fortifications, castles, moats and gates in the entire subcontinent, for which Syrian connections have been proposed.[37] Despite solid earlier studies, the evolution and interaction of these various features would repay more detailed examination than they have yet received.

CONCLUSION

This essay has above all tried to define the originality of the Gulbarga *jami'* and to place it, however summarily, in the double context of Persian fashions and of local Deccani architecture. But it must also be seen against the backdrop of Sultanate architecture as a whole. Sultanate architecture in general is full of Persian elements. Indeed, it is essentially a work in progress, with the balance between local and imported elements constantly changing from one region and century to another;[38] there is nothing close to a single Sultanate style. In that sense the Gulbarga *jami'* represents only one of many options available in pre-Mughal India.

NOTES

1 It is a pleasure to dedicate to James Allan, a friend of forty years' standing, an article based on a close study of an Islamic building, for it evokes happy memories of many a field trip in his stimulating company to do more of the same. The choice of an Indian building reflects his own close interest in Indo-Islamic culture. My warm thanks go to Beverley Wilcox and Abby McInnes for sending me their photographs for this article.

2 For this dating inscription, see Haig 1907–8: 1–2.

3 As suggested by Desai 1974, vol. II: 240–43.

4 For a basic introduction, see Yazdani 1928: 14–21; for a trenchant and perceptive summary, see also Brown 1956: 68.

5 The first serious attempt to consider this material as a whole can be found in Merklinger 1981. A more recent study, Vasantha and Basha 2004, does not supersede Merklinger's survey.

6 Burton-Page 1986: 18.

7 Merklinger 1981.

8 Merklinger 1986: 33, Fig. 4.

9 For the latter example, see Creswell 1952, vol. I: 103 and Fig. 44.

10 This uniqueness may help to explain Dr Merklinger's suggestion (1981: 32) that the building served for public audiences, but there is no need for the secular function to exclude the religious one.

11 O'Kane 2006a: 189–244.

12 Alfieri 2000: 45; Brown 1956: 69.

13 Alfieri 2000: 36 and 45. For good colour photographs, see Jain-Neubauer 2006: 38–39.

14 This is a theme that has been explored by Barry Flood in numerous recent publications, especially in the context of inter-confessional links.

15 See n. 2 above.

16 The *locus classicus* is the Bidar madrasa (Merklinger 1976–77: 144–57).

17 The case of the Iraqi Ziryab, who became an arbiter of fashion in ninth-century Córdoba and clearly exploited the cachet of his metropolitan culture in comfortably distant Andalusia, springs to mind. See Farmer and Neubauer, 'Ziryab' (EI²).

18 For example Fergusson 1910, vol. II: 263.

19 See Hillenbrand 1986: 181–94.

20 Grabar 1990.

21 The winter prayer hall, added to the Isfahan mosque in the mid-fifteenth century, was a further multi-vaulted area, and indeed bears a passing resemblance to the interior of the Gulbarga *jami'*; the lighting is achieved by alabaster slabs set into the crowns of the vaults.

22 Michell and Eaton, Firuzabad 1992: 10–11, quoting the Tarikh-i Firishta.

23 Burton-Page 1986: 18.

24 For an overview of Tughluqid architecture, see Welch and Crane 1983: 123–66 (largely Delhi); for Multan, see Hillenbrand 1992: 148–74.

25 For a colour plate, see Kamiya 2004: 423, Fig. 4.

26 Also found in the squinch zone of the mausoleum of Sanjar in Merv.

27 Sahai 2004: 76.

28 Brown 1956: 66 gives a good general context for this phenomenon.

29 Ansari 1988: 495–98.

30 Wilber 1987: 31–44.

31 Merklinger 1975: 196.

32 E.g. Mughith al-Shirazi in the tombs of Ahmad I and Khalilallah at Bidar. Sherwani 1985: 131 and 154. A Hisn Kayfi worked at Firuzabad (Michell and Eaton 1992: 34).

33 Chaghtai 1937: 87.

34 Yazdani 1929: 51, 82–83; Brand 2006: 90–91.

35 Especially in the Ibrahim-ki Rauza, built by the Persian architect Malik Sandal.

36 Such as the tiger and the sun at the Takht Mahall in Bidar (Yazdani 1947, Pl. 37). Shokoohy 1994: 65–78.

37 Brown 1956: 67.

38 For an overview, see Merklinger 2005; and, for the notion that the term itself is unsatisfactory, see Patel 2006: 9–12. But no satisfactory alternative is forthcoming. Incidentally, the absence of the Deccan from this volume somewhat skews its coverage.

PART 3

MAMLUK METALWORK IN FOCUS

8

AN EXTRAORDINARY MAMLUK CASKET IN THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM

RACHEL WARD

The star of the Islamic metalwork collection[1] in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge is a Mamluk inlaid brass casket (Plates 5 and 6).[2] The history of its acquisition by the Reverend Thomas Hewitt in Italy and its donation to the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1908 (after unsuccessful negotiations with the British Museum) is given in the appendix to this article. The casket is unusual in form and decoration and in the range of inscriptions it bears. L.A. Mayer published its dedicatory inscription in *Saracenic Heraldry* in 1933 with a description of the blazon and a small black and white illustration.[3] The patron was not identified by Mayer and the casket has not been discussed or published since. It deserves to be better known.

The casket is a cuboid with faceted ends (four narrow panels with wider panels either side) which is given considerable additional height by its domed lid (height 27.3, width 22.8, depth 11.8cm). It was constructed from separate sheets of brass soldered together. A join down the centre of the back wall was originally well disguised by the inlaid medallion (Plate 6). The base sheet turned up around the sides protected their lower edges. The rims of body and lid have been reinforced with copper and brass twisted into a decorative striped cable.[4] Inside the rim a band of copper has been soldered to keep the closed lid in position. No other caskets like this one are known from the Mamluk period, but other boxes, such as pen-cases, are all beaten to shape. The sheet construction used here is typical of larger furniture, such as Qur'an chests and chandeliers, and architectural fittings such as door plaques.

Before they were joined, the brass sheets were hammered into moulds to create relief medallions and palmettes and deep impressions of stars and rosettes. Small florets were

cast separately and screwed into the centre of each star and rosette. There are two deep stars on the front of the casket, two stars and a rosette on the base, two palmettes within a heart-shaped design on the top of the lid, and two medallions with large palmette terminals on each side of the casket. In addition, moulds were used to form the cartouche shape of the base (Fig. 8.1) and the regular facets of the sides of the casket. The three-dimensional nature of the decoration on the casket is very unusual for fourteenth-century Mamluk metalwork, and may have been inspired by the relief shapes seen in the brass revetments of doors.[5] A small number of vessels feature a recessed rosette with a central floret on their underside, including a tankard in the British Museum.[6] The shapes of these are strikingly similar to Mamluk and Ottoman fountains (Fig. 8.5).

Two hinges on the back and a matching hinge for a closing panel on the front are fixed to the casket by brass screws. The closing panel has been replaced by a crude strip of iron; the closing loop is also a later addition – two brass screws in the top panel of script indicate where an earlier loop was fastened.[7] Mamluk metalworkers usually left space within the decoration for any attachments (there is space in the decoration at the top of the lid for the ring that is attached there), but the closing panel and its loop hide the central part of the dedicatory inscription. The hinges are similar to others of the fourteenth century and are decorated in the same style and technique as the casket: perhaps they were added soon after the casket was finished, by the same workshop,

FIG. 8.1 View of the base of the casket.

because the owner wanted to be able to lock the vessel?[8] The small brass ring attached to the top of the lid is a puzzle: it cannot have been intended for suspension as the single screw fixing is too weak to support the weight of the casket and its contents.[9]

The front panel of the casket is treated as a single decorative unit framed by a thick border (originally inlaid with silver). The layout, unknown on other Mamluk vessels, is similar to that of Qur'anic frontispieces and mosque doors, which often feature a star design with panels of script above and below, within a wide framing band.[10]

The front of the domed lid has a rectangular panel containing 'flame' script (Fig. 8.2), in which the shafts of the letters curve across and overlap each other, the tapering tips fastened into pairs by a gold band before issuing a mass of foliage. When inlaid with silver and gold this inscription, which dwarfs the other two and is framed by narrow scrolls above and below, would have been a spectacular and dominant feature of the decoration. Flame script first appears on Mamluk metalwork in the second half of the fourteenth century, such as on the tankard in the British Museum, and the pen-box made for Sultan al-Mansur Muhammad dated 764/1363.[11]

The angled sides flanking the front panel each bear a relief medallion terminating in bold palmettes. Both medallions contain a Mamluk blazon (Plate 5), a pen-box in the centre of a three-field roundel. The pen-box was the blazon of a *dawadar* or secretary. It does not appear on Mamluk objects before the middle of the fourteenth century, probably because *dawadar* was a relatively junior position before then.[12] By the 1380s, the design of the pen-box blazon had changed: the pen-box symbol had acquired an additional element to the left of the two long horizontal lines, and it was usually part of a composite blazon displayed with other symbols.[13] The blazon on the casket must date to the period between the 1340s and 1370s, as does the similar blazon on the bottle made for Jurji, who began his career as a *dawadar*.[14] The display of the blazon in a vertical format with large palmettes above and below belongs to the same period although it is much more common in an architectural context than on metal vessels.[15]

The back of the casket is plainer, with a large medallion containing scrolls around a five-petal rosette with finials above and below (Plate 6). The lid has a relief palmette to match the one on the front, but the rest of the surface is left bare. The four narrow panels on each side are inlaid with scrolling stems, leaves and rosettes. The two wider panels have a border with similar scrolls, the front ones have the relief blazon medallions but the back ones are left empty. I do not know any other Mamluk metal vessel with different decoration on front and back. The only explanation is that the back of the casket was only rarely seen – I will return below to the function of the casket.

Silver and gold are both used in the decoration. The wide framing bands, originally inlaid with silver, would have created a very bold impression. Gold is used more sparingly than silver: for the pen-box blazons, for the five-petal rosettes (including

those on the hinge panels), and for small motifs within the decoration on the front and sides. There is no gold on the back apart from the rosettes on the hinge panels. The inlay technique is distinctive: wire is hammered into very fine pits in parallel lines. The sheet silver is thickly applied over unrecessed areas and attached by hammering into a pitted groove around its edge. The gold sheet is thinner, the areas smaller, the surface stippled to provide grip, and the grooves around it shallower in order to conserve the more valuable metal.

INSCRIPTIONS

Mamluk inscriptions are rarely just decorative. Some name the owner of the vessel, who is introduced either with humility (usually religious objects such as mosque lamps) or with fulsome titles. Some wish blessings on the owner or praise him in verse. Others relate to the function of the vessel itself. This vessel is unusual in featuring all of these.

The titular inscription on the lid (Fig. 8.2) is *al-maqarr al-karim al-ʿala al-mawlawi al-maliki al-ʿalimi al-ʿamili al-ʿadili* ('The noble and high excellency, the lord, the royal, the wise, the diligent, the just').

Mamluk titles on metalwork were closely related to the status of the individual. In the early Mamluk period, titles beginning *al-maqarr al-karim al-ʿala* were reserved for those occupying the very highest offices of the court. During the last two decades of the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad (r.1294–1340 with interruptions) these titles began to be applied more widely, sometimes even for favourite individuals rather than important office holders, but they are among the highest titles seen in Mamluk inscriptions in the fourteenth century.[16] The same titles (and a pen-box blazon) are seen on the enamelled glass bottle in the V&A, made for the Amir Jurji when he was Majordomo (*Ustadar*) to Sultan al-Nasir Hasan (d.1361), one of the most important positions at the Mamluk court.[17] Their presence here suggests that their owner was a very favoured individual or a high-ranking official (or a combination of both).

FIG. 8.2 Detail of the inscription on the lid.

The omission of certain titles is revealing. Ostentatiously military titles such as *al-mujahid* (Muslim warrior) were generally included in inscriptions naming army officers. *Al-amir al-kabir* (great amir) was included for the most senior Mamluk amirs. The inscription in the name of Jurji, whose career was in high-ranking administrative posts, also omits military titles and *al-amir al-kabir*. The regnal title of the sultan was usually appended to the name of an individual who was in that sultan's direct service: Jurji's inscription ends *al-Maliki al-Nasiri*, indicating his position in the service of Sultan al-Nasir (Hasan). These omissions suggest that the owner of the casket was an administrative official rather than a military amir, and that he was not working directly for the sultan but was still of high enough status to deserve some very grand titles.

The dedicatory inscription along the top of the front side (Fig. 8.3) is *mimma 'umila bi-rasm al-'abd al-faqir 'ila Allah ta'ala Muhammad [bin A]sandamur al-Nasiri* ('This was made for the use of the poor servant of God the exalted Muhammad [son of A]sandamur al-Nasiri').

The only section which cannot be read with complete confidence is that between Muhammad and al-Nasiri. In 1905, A.G. Ellis read this part of the inscription as *Muhammad Uddat al-Nasiri*.[18] In 1924, in a note kept with the object in the Fitzwilliam, Mayer read it as *Muhammad Ustadar al-Nasiri*.[19] By the time Mayer published the inscription in 1933 he had changed his mind: he moved the troublesome word and read the last part of the inscription as *Sidi Muhammad al-Nasiri*.[20] No one has queried that reading since.

During the Mamluk period, *sidi* was a title used by male descendants of a sultan, so if this word reads *sidi*, Muhammad al-Nasiri must have been the son or grandson of a Mamluk sultan. The title occurs frequently in historical texts, but is rarely found in inscriptions on Mamluk metalwork before the late fifteenth century – this would be the earliest occurrence known to me.[21] There are several critical differences in the use of the title *sidi* on other (later) Mamluk objects. The father's name is always included (which is not surprising as these princelings derived their status from their ancestry), but there is no father in this reading of the inscription. The title *sidi* occurs after the *laqab*, but there is no *laqab* here. *Sidi* is always written before the name of the prince, whereas here it comes slightly after (Mayer moved it in order to make sense of it).

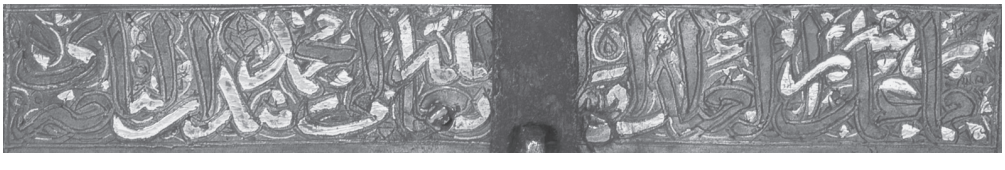

FIG. 8.3 Detail of inscription along the top of the front side.

These omissions and differences make it highly unlikely that *sidi* is the correct reading of this word.

If the word is read where it is placed, after *Muhammad*, it is most likely to be the name of Muhammad's father even though the word meaning 'son of', usually *ibn*, is missing.[22] Fathers (and grandfathers) feature in the names of most individuals on medieval Arab objects, whether they were the patron or the craftsman. The Mamluk period is an anomaly because the genetic father of most amirs was not known to them, but even in this period non-Mamluks continued to use the name of their father. The name Muhammad indicates that he was born a Muslim. As a non-Mamluk he would not have been entitled to a blazon, so he is likely to have been one of the *awlad al-nas* (sons of Mamluks) who often used the blazon of their Mamluk father.[23] The *awlad al-nas* were more dependent for their status on their fathers than any other group, so it would be very odd if the name of Muhammad's father was not included in a dedicatory inscription of this sort. *Al-Nasiri* also makes most sense as part of a name. The regnal title of a sultan was often appended to the name of his Mamluks after his death as a sign of group loyalty, whereas if the amir was in the active service of a sultan, *al-maliki* preceded the regnal title.[24] A good example is the inscription on a lamp in the name of Aqsunqur al-Nasiri 'al-Maliki' al-Muzaffari: Aqsunqur had been a Mamluk of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad (d.1341) but was in the service of Sultan al-Muzaffar Hajji (r.1346–47) when the lamp was made.[25]

Mayer read the toothless first letter as *sin*, which is the most likely reading (diacritical points would surely have been included if it was *shin*). The next letter, a single tooth, has the usual contenders as it has no diacritical points. *Dal* is clear (although there is a possibility that it could be the less common *dhal*). Mayer read the final letter as *ya'*, but it is quite different in style to the full-bodied *ya'* that appears, for example, at the end of *al-Nasiri*, or to the kick-back *ya'* of *ta'ala*, and much closer to the *ra'* of, for example, *bi-rasm*. On close inspection there is a distinctly rounded start to the letter, disguised somewhat by proximity to the preceding *dal* and the *alif* of *al-Nasiri*, but the silver inlay still remains, and in shape it compares very closely to the final *mim* of *bi-rasm*. So the final letter could be *ra'* but is more likely to be *mim* or *mim-ra'*. In abbreviated form, the possible letters can be plotted as follows: S – B/T/Th/N/Y – D/Dh – MR/M/R.

The most likely reading is [A]sandamur, a popular Mamluk name, despite the missing *alif*. The phonetic Arabic spellings of Mamluk names can vary and there is at least one other example of *Asandamur* written without an *alif*, but in this case the *alif* and the *ibn* which would have immediately preceded it were probably both omitted by mistake by the inlayer when he copied the inscription, which had been written out by a professional calligrapher.[26]

If Asandamur is the correct reading of this word, Muhammad's father must be Sayf al-Din Asandamur al-Nasiri al-Dawadar, referred to in the sources as Asandamur al-Nasiri, an immensely powerful amir at the Mamluk court in Cairo, especially in the mid-1360s. He was originally a Mamluk of a grandson of al-Nasir Muhammad but was acquired by al-Nasir Hasan (hence al-Nasiri in his name); after the sultan's death in 1361 he was in the service of Yalbugha al-'Umari al-Nasiri, who was effective ruler at this time, as the new sultan was an adolescent. Yalbugha gave Asandamur his first position as junior *dawadar*. As a *dawadar* in the 1360s Asandamur's blazon would have been a pen-box of the earlier type, before the fourth element was introduced. In March 1366, Yalbugha promoted him to the highest rank, *muqaddam alf*. Despite this promotion, Asandamur was one of six amirs responsible for the rebellion against Yalbugha which culminated in his assassination in December 1366. By March 1367 Asandamur was himself virtual ruler of the Mamluk empire. According to Maqrizi, he had acquired 'the status of his *ustadh* Yalbugha, managing the affairs of the regime, issuing the appointments and dismissals of its officials, and living in Yalbugha's residence at al-Kabsh'.[27] A long list of his promotions of favoured individuals in June 1367 is recorded in the sources, confirming his power of appointment during this time. He could not maintain his position for long, however, because al-Ashraf Sha'ban was getting older and more powerful. In October 1367 the Sultan managed to overthrow him. Asandamur was imprisoned in Alexandria and died shortly afterwards in 1368.[28]

Family ties have been underplayed by historians of the Mamluk period, who have focused instead on the bonds created by the Mamluk 'system'.[29] Quite apart from normal paternal wishes to ensure the position of his offspring in society, sons were valuable assets to powerful Mamluk amirs: they were dependent, trustworthy and marriageable (many alliances were sealed by marriage between families). Asandamur relied on the loyalty of an unstable group of Mamluks (not his own) to maintain his position at the top of the court hierarchy. He needed protection from them and a safe conduit through which to communicate with them and others, in order to be able to respond with gifts or promises of promotion when required. A son acting as gatekeeper would have been an ideal solution.

While the reading of a crucial section of the dedicatory inscription remains uncertain, it is not possible to establish the identity of the patron of the casket with total confidence; however, we can be sure of certain facts. Muhammad was born a Muslim and so was not a Mamluk. The high-ranking titles suggest that he was a favourite or held high office at court (or both), but he was not an army officer, nor was he in the direct service of the ruling sultan. The presence of a blazon suggests that he was a member of the *awlad al-nas*: the son of a Mamluk amir, and so able to inherit a blazon from his father. The style

of the blazon suggests that his father started his Mamluk career as a *dawadar* between the 1340s and 1370s. *Al-Nasiri* (without *al-Maliki*) suggests that either Muhammad (if the following word is not his father's name) or his father (if it is) had been in the service of al-Nasir Hasan, but that the casket post-dates the sultan's death in 1361. The style of the individual elements of the decoration all fit a date in the third quarter of the fourteenth century. None of these facts contradict a tentative identification of Muhammad as a son of Asandamur al-Nasiri.[30]

The verse inscription along the bottom of the front side (read by Doris Behrens-Abouseif; Fig. 8.4)[31] is *sabahak maqrur wa 'izz wa dawla wa babak maftuh li-ahl al-hawa'ij*. Translation of poetry is always difficult. Puns are common, and so words have more than one meaning. In this case there is an additional twist – the inscription appears to address both the owner of the casket and the casket itself: 'May your morning be fresh(*?*)/ennobled(*?*)[32] with glory[33] and power[34] and your door/lid[35] be open to the needy/petitions'.

The implied references to royal glory (*'izz*) and political power (*dawla*) and the presence within the casket of petitions (*hawa'ij*) suggest that the casket contained official documents. This text would be absolutely appropriate for a gatekeeper to the most powerful man in the Mamluk empire. Public sessions (*khidma*) were held weekly for individuals to have their petitions read aloud to the Sultan or his representative. Inevitably, trusted individuals were responsible for sifting and filtering these petitions. As al-Maqrizi explained, 'When someone wants to be appointed anywhere, he needs to talk to someone close to the amir Barka, until what he wants is assigned to him. Then [Barka] will send that man to Barquq [the Sultan], informing him of what he wants, so as to get his agreement too.'[36]

The flattened shape and frontal focus of the casket suggest that it was displayed within a specific architectural setting, such as an alcove within a public room similar to the (later) Damascus room in the Metropolitan Museum (Fig. 8.5). The three-dimensional nature of the decoration would have been appropriate for such a context and, as noted above, there are several overtly architectural references in the decoration: the domed lid, the stars between panels of inscription like doors, the stars with central floret-like fountains, the vertical bias of the blazon medallions. The high domed lid

FIG. 8.4 Detail of inscription along the bottom of the front side.

FIG. 8.5 The Damascus Room, Damascus 1119/1707, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of The Hagop Kevorkian Fund, no 1970.170.

emphasised the importance of the documents within and also meant that the top of the scrolls protruded from the box when the lid was open, thus enabling the correct one to be selected.

Is it too fanciful to imagine Muhammad, the son of Asandamur al-Nasiri, seated at the end of a room similar to the one preserved in the Metropolitan Museum, receiving supplicants and their petitions, filing the successful petitions in the (lockable) casket displayed alongside him, then carrying the casket into the weekly session (*khidma*) for those petitions to be read aloud and decided upon by his father?

APPENDIX: FROM ALASSIO TO CAMBRIDGE, THE MODERN HISTORY OF THE CASKET[37]

The casket was acquired around 1895 by the Reverend Thomas Hewitt from an antiquities dealer in Alassio, from whom he had previously bought other objects. Hewitt was at that time vicar in Alassio on the Italian Riviera, a popular area for British holidaymakers which also had a large population of British residents. After ten years as vicar there, he returned to England and settled at Farncombe, Ellesmere, Godalming in Surrey.[38] He was related to James and William Hewitt of Lower Park, Dedham outside Cambridge, with whom he was staying when written to by Dalton in August 1905. The Hewitt brothers are known in Cambridge for the James Hewitt Memorial Exhibition, founded by William on the death of his brother in 1907 for the benefit, primarily, of pupils of the Colchester Royal Grammar School. I have been able to find nothing more on Thomas Hewitt's life and activities apart from the fact that he was a member of the Surrey Archaeological Society.[39]

As reported by Hewitt, the antiquities dealer in Alassio claimed that the casket was found enclosed in the wall of a house being demolished in a coastal town near Genoa c.1895. Two different locations for the house are given in Hewitt's letters: in his letter to O.M. Dalton on 24 July 1905 he claims that it was in Pietra Liguria, a coastal town on the Gulf of Genoa in Liguria; but in his letter to the Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, dated 7 October 1908, he claims that it was found in Final Marina (Ligure Marina or Finalmarina), the port of the town of Finale Ligure slightly further west.[40]

Hewitt suggested that the casket was a Qur'an holder and may have been brought to Italy by pirates operating out of North Africa. But it is more likely to have arrived via Genoese merchants who were actively trading in the Mamluk empire from the fourteenth century on. Italian merchants found a ready market for Mamluk inlaid brass vessels in Italy, especially those most adaptable to Western use; a box of this sort would have been a very desirable commodity.[41]

On 24 July 1905 Hewitt wrote to O.M. Dalton at the British Museum asking for an opinion on the casket.[42] He ended, 'If the Vessel should turn out to be worthy of the Museum's acceptance I shall be glad to make provision for its being sent to the Museum at my death or earlier.'

Although Dalton had curatorial responsibility for the medieval Middle Eastern collection, his own interests were in Christian and Byzantine material, so he sent the casket to his colleague A.G. Ellis, an Arabist in the Department of Oriental Manuscripts.[43] Ellis replied with a rough translation of the inscription (he did not transcribe the Arabic), reading 'May your morning be fraught with honour and wealth! May it come to you

bringing joy! May you not be straightened [sic] in means!'; but he dismissed the idea that it was a container for a Qur'an. Dalton then replied to Hewitt on 31 July 1905:

> Dear Sir
> I enclose a letter from Mr A.G. Ellis, of the British Museum, containing the translation of the inscriptions on your box. You will see that he is against the theory that it was made for a Koran, but I do not pretend to decide for what other purpose it may have been made. The technique is that of a large class of Saracenic metal-work well represented in our collections here, and reaching its highest artistical development in the 13th and 14th centuries in Mesopotamia, Persia, Syria, and Egypt. Your example is Egyptian, and, while certainly not modern, must be later than the 14th century, as the workmanship is not equal to that of the earlier Middle Ages. All that one can say is that it belongs to the period between the 15th and 18th centuries.
>
> I am returning it by parcel post.
>
> Yours faithfully, O.M. Dalton, for the Keeper.

A disappointed Hewitt thanked him for his help in a letter dated 2 August 1905 and continued, 'I assume from your mention of the large amount of high class Saracenic metal work possessed by the Museum that you do not consider the present casket worthy of the acceptance of the Museum. In that case I am disposed to offer it for the acceptance of my own University Museum – the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge.'

Dalton confirmed his assumption in a letter dated 3 August 1905:

> Dear Sir
> I think that as the metal casket is a late example of the Oriental inlaid work of which we have so fine a series, we should, perhaps, be acting a rather selfish part in availing ourselves of your generous offer, and might fitly stand aside in favour of the Cambridge Museum. We are much obliged to you, in any case, for thinking of us. We need not ask you to repay the postage of the parcel, as the casket was sent here for the possible advantage of the Museum.
>
> Yours faithfully, O.M. Dalton.

Three years later, on 7 October 1908, Hewitt wrote to S.C. Cockerell Esq., the newly appointed Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum: 'My hope is that the casket may find a nesting place in the Fitzwilliam Museum. I do not remember to have seen there any work of quite the same kind. Anyhow I shall be glad to have your opinion of it and if you think it is worthy of a home in the Museum, I hope that you will keep it.'

Hewitt found a much more sympathetic recipient in Cockerell, later Sir Sidney Cockerell, who is credited with transforming the Fitzwilliam Museum and acquiring some spectacular objects for its collections during his long directorship (1908–37).[44] Cockerell had a real interest in the arts of the Middle East: the first purchase under his direction by the newly formed 'Friends of the Fitzwilliam' (1909–) was a panel of sixteenth-century Iznik tiles, costing 42 guineas. He replied to Hewitt immediately:

Dear Sir,
I beg to acknowledge with many thanks the Egyptian metal casket which you are so good as to offer to the University for preservation in this museum. I am unable to add anything to what is stated in the letters of Messrs Dalton and Ellis as to the date and use of the casket. The workmanship is not of the *finest* kind, but is nevertheless interesting and beautiful, and as our Oriental collection is at present an exceedingly small one, it is a doubly welcome gift.

I am, Dear Sir, Yours very faithfully Sydney C. Cockerell, Director.

NOTES

1 James Allan's enthusiasm for Mamluk metalwork is infectious; as his student it was inevitable that I would catch the bug. I dedicate this article to him with enormous gratitude for many stimulating lectures, seminars and conversations then and since.

2 Reg. No O.2–1908. I am grateful to the Fitzwilliam Museum for allowing me to publish this fascinating object and to Rebecca Bridgman, Research Assistant for Islamic Pottery in the Department of Applied Arts, for arranging for it to be cleaned, photographed and made available to me to study – and for putting it back on display in the gallery.

3 Mayer 1933: 157–58 and Pl. 36/2.

4 This cable could be a later addition, but it is identical to the cable used on the Mamluk restoration of an Ayyubid flask in the Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. 1398–1888 (unpublished) which also has a recessed rosette as a main decorative feature and is probably from the same workshop as the casket. As there are so many other unusual features on this casket, I am inclined to assume that the cable is original.

5 For example, the north doors of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus dated 809/1406 have a variety of *repoussé* motifs, illustrated in Allan 1984: Pl. 11.

6 Inv. OA 1887.6–12.1 (for an image, search for '1887,0612.1' at http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.aspx). See Allan 1982: 89 for an illustration of the recessed rosette with central floret in the underside of an incense-burner in the name of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad (d.1341).

7 The iron closer was attached before the casket was buried within the wall of the house in Italy according to Revd Hewitt (letter dated 24 July 1905, British Museum Archives).

8 Similar hinges on the Qur'an box dated 723/1322 in the Mosque of al-Azhar have matching spaces within the decoration, illustrated in Cairo 1969: no 60.

9 Tears in the brass lid, later reinforced by solder within the lid, may have been caused by a misguided attempt to suspend the casket.

10 The visual connection between these doors and frontispieces was an intentional pun: the door to the Qur'an, the frontispiece to the mosque.

11 The pen-box is illustrated in Wiet 1932: 123–25 (no 4461), Pls 3, 4.

12 According to Haarman 1988: 105, n.116, 'Before 1350 the promotion of a *dawadar* to a rank higher than *amir tablakhana* was truly exceptional'. Mayer 1933: 232–34 claims Tughaytimur al-Najmi was the first high-ranking *dawadar*. He was promoted to 'amir of 100' at the beginning of Hajji's reign (747–48/1346–47) and it is probably significant that a mosque lamp made for him during Hajji's reign is the first datable example of a pen-box blazon. This lamp is illustrated in Curatola 1994: 324–26 (no 190).

13 For the development of the pen-box blazon, see drawings in Mayer 1933: 12. The blazon of Yunus al-Dawadar (d.1389), which appears on buildings dated to the 1380s, is the first datable example of the pen-box with a fourth element (it is also part of a composite blazon): Mayer 1933: 254–57 and Pl. 55/1–4.

14 Victoria and Albert Museum inv. no 223–1879: glass bottle, enamelled and gilded, made for Sayf al-Din Jurji Ustadar (Majordomo) in the service of al-Malik al-Nasir, Egypt or Syria, before al-Nasir Hasan's death in 1361. For an image see http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O624/bottle/.

15 For examples in the Madrasa of Sarghitmish in Cairo (built 1356) and the mosque built by Aqsunqur (after 1346) see Meinecke 1972: Pls 60a and 62b.

16 On status inflation under al-Nasir Muhammad see Haarmann 1998: 66. The higher titles (*al-maqarr al-ashraf al-'ala* and *al-maqarr al-sharif al-'ala*) were reserved for individuals such as Tankiz (d.1340, long-term Governor of Damascus), Ali al-Maridani (d.1371, Viceroy of Egypt) or Arghun al-Ala'i (d.1348, chief power broker of the 1340s). For inscriptions in the name of these individuals and a useful place to compare titles used in Mamluk inscriptions, see Mayer 1933. For an outline of the relative status of Mamluk titles such as these, see al-Qalqashandi 1913–18, vol. V: 494–95; vol. VI: 126–27.

17 For a brief summary of Jurji's career and references, see Mayer 1933: 134–35.

18 Internal letter to O.M. Dalton in the Department of Antiquities dated 31 July 1905, preserved in the Archives of the Department of Prehistory and Europe, British Museum.

19 Note dated 3 June 1924 from Dr Mayer of the Archaeological Survey Jerusalem, in the archive of the Fitzwilliam Museum. In the note Mayer transcribed the Arabic and translated it 'Of what has been made by order of the poor servant of God the Exalted Muhammad the majordomo (?) of al-Malik an-Nasir'; he also identified the blazon of a *dawadar*, Secretary of State. His Arabic transcription of the problematic word is *[U]stadaar* with a single long vowel. The correct spelling of *Ustaadaar* with two long vowels is an even less likely reading.

20 Mayer 1933: 157–58.

21 For examples of this title in fifteenth-century and later inscriptions see Mayer 1933: 56–57, 162–63, 165, 261. It is significant that Muhammad ibn Katbugha, the son of Sultan al-'Adil Katbugha (r.1294–96) does not describe himself as *sidi* in any of the three inscriptions in his name: see Mayer 1933: 160–61.

22 Omissions and mistakes occur quite often in Mamluk inscriptions. For example, one of a pair of glass lamps made for the Amir Tuquzdamur (British Museum OA 1869.6–21, 1

and 2) omits a section of his titles and both spell his name with a *dal* although it is spelt with a *ta'* in other inscriptions and in the sources. For published inscriptions in his name, including those of the lamps, see Mayer 1933: 235–39.

23 One of several examples of sons using their fathers' blazons is Muhammad ibn Katbugha, who adopted the cup blazon of his father: see Mayer 1933: 160–61 and Pl. 22/3. In the later fourteenth century, pen-box blazons were also sometimes used by very high-ranking administrative officials. For example, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Muzhir (d.1488) was *nazir diwan al-insha* when he built his madrasa in Cairo, and his pen-box blazon features in the architecture and the *minbar* (Mayer 1933: 46). If Muhammad had been a top official in the administration, one would expect his job title to be included and his royal allegiance also. After the introduction of composite blazons for the amiral class at the end of the fourteenth century, the use of pen-box blazons by non-Mamluk officials became much more common.

24 By the middle of the fourteenth century it was standard practice to include *al-maliki* before the regnal title to indicate current service, but thirteenth-century inscriptions often omit it. For example, the inscription on an incense-burner in the British Museum in the name of Badr al-Din Baysari al-Zahiri al-Sa'idi refers to two sultans, al-Zahir Baybars (r.1260–77) and al-Sa'id Baraka Khan (r.1277–79). For an illustration of the incense-burner see Ward 1993: Fig. 87; for the inscription, see Mayer 1933: 112.

25 Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, inv. no 3202, in Wiet 1929: 124–25 and Pl. 14. On *awlad al-nas* see Haarmann 1998, especially 62 and 64 on the *sidi*s.

26 Asandamur is written Sandamur in the manuscript used by Brinner 1963, vol. I: 328. On the flexible spelling of Mamluk names and mistakes by craftsmen when copying inscriptions, see n. 21 above.

27 Quoted in Van Steenbergen 2006: 161.

28 See Van Steenbergen 2006: especially 64, 71, 128, 138, 161–62, 179–80 for a summary of Asandamur's life and the main references to him in the sources. See also Van Steenbergen 2011 for a discussion of Asandamur's role in the power politics of the 1360s.

29 For a new assessment of the importance of family to the Mamluks see Van Steenbergen 2006: especially 76–85.

30 I have found no mention of Muhammad or any other son of Asandamur al-Nasiri in the sources. This is disappointing but not surprising, as few sons of Mamluk amirs achieved sufficient status to be noticed by contemporary historians.

31 I am grateful to Doris Behrens-Abouseif for this new reading and translation of the inscription and for discussing its interpretation with me.

32 The Arabic root QRR usually means coolness, often associated with water, but it was also the source of the Mamluk title *al-maqarr* (literally resting place) used in the titular inscription on the lid, so a pun may have been intended here.

33 *'Izz* (glory) is an attribute of royalty. All dedications to Mamluk Sultans begin *'izz li-mawlana al-sultan* (glory to our Lord the Sultan).

34 *Dawla* was the term used by Mamluk historians for dynasty/government/administration; it evokes a practical application of power.

35 Again a double meaning is suggested here, depending on whether one reads the addressee as the owner of the vessel or the vessel itself.

36 On *khidma* and gatekeepers at the Mamluk court, see Van Steenbergen 2006: 40, 54 n. 65 (for the quote by Maqrizi).

37 The following correspondence is divided between the archives of the British Museum and the Fitzwilliam Museum. I have copied all the relevant letters in the British Museum so that there is now a full set of the correspondence with the vessel in the Fitzwilliam Museum.

38 The address on his letterhead.

39 He is listed as member of the society in its publication, the Surrey Archaeological Collections for 1906.

40 The town is divided into three districts, Finale Pia to the east, the original town centre; Finale Borgo, an old walled town further inland; and the port at Finale Marina.

41 For an overview of the Mamluk metalwork desired by the European market see Ward 2007.

42 Ormonde Maddock Dalton (1866–1945) worked in the British Museum between 1885 and 1928. He was Assistant Keeper in the Department of Antiquities, then (after it was divided) Keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities.

43 Alexander George Ellis joined the Department of Oriental Manuscripts in 1883, and catalogued the Arabic book collection. He was grandson of Sir Henry Ellis, Keeper of the Department of Printed Books from 1806 to 1812.

44 An exhibition about Cockerell's time at the Fitzwilliam Museum called '"I turned it into a Palace": Sir Sidney Cockerell and the Fitzwilliam Museum' was held at the museum between November 2008 and March 2009.

9

A MAMLUK TRAY AND ITS JOURNEY TO THE V&A

TIM STANLEY

One of the first acquisitions of what is now the Victoria and Albert Museum, or V&A, in London was a large and splendid Mamluk brass tray (Fig. 9.1). This object, purchased in 1854, was made in Egypt or Syria between 1330 and 1360 and is now presented as a fine example of 'Islamic art'. This category did not exist in 1854, when the tray was seen primarily as a model of good design, the theme to which the new museum was dedicated. In the 1850s, the future V&A made such acquisitions only in Europe, and evidence that the tray was traded to Europe at an early date comes in the form of a Venetian coat-of-arms inserted into the decoration in the fifteenth century. Its presence allows us to reconstruct a skeleton biography for the object, which exemplifies the European admiration for the art of the Islamic world over a very long period.[1]

The main sources for this investigation are the physical appearance of the tray, and the comments of luminaries in the world of art and design in nineteenth-century London. The shift between the two sources parallels the change in the status of the tray. It began as a piece of luxury tableware and remained so over a long period, as described in Part 1 below. In 1854, however, it re-emerged in a new guise, as a museum object subject to interpretation in a way that would have been alien to its earlier owners, as described in Part 2.

FIG. 9.1 Tray made for Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun or his son Hasan, Egypt or Syria, about 1330–60, diameter 78.7cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 420-1854.

PART 1: WHAT THE TRAY TELLS US

The tray, which has the museum number 420–1854, was hammered from sheet brass to form a flat, circular surface 78.7cm in diameter, to which a low, vertical rim was attached. The upper surface was engraved with a complex design, once filled with what art historians conventionally call inlaid decoration. There are enough traces of this decoration to show that the recessed compartments within the design were originally filled with a black adhesive compound to which gold and silver foils had been applied, and that the edges of the foils were then hammered into place (Plate 7).[2] The outside of the rim also has engraved ornament, but this was not filled in the same way.

The most striking feature of the tray's decoration is a series of well-composed inscriptions in Arabic.[3] Three are presented as running text, including the one in

monumental script in the *thuluth* style found in the wide outer register, which reads, 'Glory to our lord the Sultan, the king, wise, diligent and just, who harries the enemy – May his victory be glorified!'[4] Four more inscriptions are presented as 'epigraphic sunbursts', in which a text is arranged in a circle with the uprights of some letters lengthened inwards to suggest the rays of the sun. Finally, there are 18 'epigraphic blazons', which contain short texts written across a fess on a circular shield; in 15 cases, the text is, 'Glory to our lord the Sultan', while the other three give the regnal name *al-Malik al-Nasir*.[5] Despite the variety of forms, all the texts are related, deriving from one or more acclamations calling glory on the sultan. The acclamations, based on a standard series of official titles employed by the Mamluk chancery, were trimmed and re-arranged to fit the different spaces on the tray.

The most information is provided by the inscription in running text on the outside of the vertical rim of the tray. Although the longest of all the inscriptions, this is also the least prominent, as it is found in a subsidiary area of decoration that, as already mentioned, has no decoration in gold and silver. Perhaps as a consequence of its lack of prominence, no great care was taken with composing this text, which is jumbled. For example, it contains two regnal names, *al-Malik al-Nasir* and *al-Malik al-Mansur*, without their relationship to one another being made explicit:

> *'izz li-mawlana al-Sultan al-Malik al-Nasir*[6] *al-'alim al-'amil al-'adil al-ghazi al-mujahid al-murabit al-muthaghir al-mu'ayyad al-mansur Nasir al-Dunya wa'l-Din, qatil al-kafarah wa'l-mushrikin, muhyi'l-'adl fi'l-'alamin, abu'l-fuqara' wa'l-masakin al-Sultan al-Malik al-Mansur Nasir al-Dunya wa'l-Din*
>
> Glory to our lord the Sultan, al-Malik al-Nasir, wise, diligent and just, who harries the enemy and engages in holy war, who stands in constant readiness for the defence of Islam and protects its frontiers, who has divine support for his rule and is aided by God in achieving victory, Nasir al-Dunya wa'l-Din, the slayer of infidels and polytheists, who gives life to justice among the inhabitants of the world, the father of the poor and the indigent, the Sultan al-Malik al-Mansur Nasir al-Dunya wa'l-Din.

As the regnal name *al-Malik al-Nasir*, found at the beginning of this inscription, is also inscribed in three of the epigraphic blazons on the upper surface of the tray, it seems likely that the tray was made under a sultan who used this title. One was al-Malik al-Nasir Muhammad (ruled three times, 1293–94, 1299–1309, and 1310–41). This sultan also bore the *laqab* Nasir al-Dunya wa'l-Din, and his father was al-Malik al-Mansur Qalawun, which would explain the occurrence of his regnal name towards the end of the inscription, in line with some inscriptions on objects that we know for certain were made for Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun.[7] Accordingly, the tray was ascribed to his reign by Stanley Lane-Poole, when he published its inscriptions in 1886.[8]

Certainly, the tray could have been made no earlier than Sultan Muhammad's reign, as its ornament reflects major changes that took place in this period.[9] Until the 1320s inlaid metalwork continued to be made for Sultan Muhammad in a style similar to the work done for his predecessors. In this decade and the 1330s, however, the inlaid brasswares made for this sultan were decorated in a new and quite different style. Scenes with figures were eliminated, and greater prominence was given to inscriptions recording the name and titles of the sultan. As on the V&A tray, these texts were presented both as running text and as epigraphic sunbursts, which were a novelty in this context. Other changes were the appearance of the epigraphic blazon in place of the animal blazons of earlier reigns; and the replacement of arabesque ornament by completely new types of scrollwork that often have prominent lotuses derived from Chinese models (Plate 8).

The new epigraphic blazon first appeared on a building – an aqueduct in Jerusalem – in 720/1320–21, and examples were being applied to metalwork by 728/1328, when Sultan Muhammad had a stand, or *kursi*, made for the hospital founded by his father.[10] The inscriptions in the blazons on the *kursi*, as on other items datable to the 1320s, are more complex than those on the V&A tray, but the two texts found on the tray – 'Glory to our lord the Sultan' and *al-Malik al-Nasir* – became standard from the 1330s onwards.[11] If the tray was made under Sultan Muhammad, then the most likely dating is the period between 1330 and the Sultan's death in 1341. As we shall see below, however, it is also possible that the tray was produced later in the century.

Celestial references

The overall layout of the decoration on the V&A tray – a disc-like central composition surrounded by a wide outer register filled with a monumental inscription – was in use before the great shift in design of the 1320s, but the decoration of examples made before this date includes figures. An example of the earlier type was made for Sultan Dawud, the Rasulid ruler of Yemen from 1296 to 1322.[12] The central composition is not directly related to that of the V&A tray, but its cosmological imagery and especially the way that imagery was adapted after the shift in design helps us to understand the decoration of the V&A tray and of a number of similar objects from the 1340s.

On the tray of Sultan Dawud, the central register contains a conventional design based on a grouping of small roundels – one in the centre (the sun) is surrounded by six more (the other planets of Islamic cosmology), which are surrounded in turn by another 12 (the signs of the zodiac). After the shift in design, this composition of roundels was adapted to the new non-figurative style, as can be seen from a tray now in Doha that was made for Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun in this period (Fig. 9.2).[13]

Here the central roundel with the sun has been supplanted by a much larger epigraphic sunburst, while around it float six epigraphic blazons, echoing the six 'planets' in older designs. A similar transformation no doubt produced the design of the V&A tray, where an epigraphic sunburst again fills the centre. This design does not include the six other planets, but it is possible that the roundels with the 12 signs of the zodiac find an echo in the pattern of 12 overlapping arches that surrounds the sunburst.

In the main outer register on the tray of Sultan Dawud, three large roundels, each of which contains a mounted figure, punctuate the monumental inscription in the *thuluth* style, the base line of which follows the outline of the central device, so that the uprights

FIG. 9.2 Tray made for Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun, Egypt or Syria, 1320–41, diameter 108.6cm. Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar, MW.35.1998, Photograph by Nicolas Ferrando © Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar.

of the letters *alif*, *lam* and *ta'* point outwards. This part of the design has no parallel on the Doha tray, but it does appear on a tray in Palermo that was made for a high-ranking amir after the shift in design in the 1320s;[14] there the horsemen in the roundels were replaced by epigraphic sunbursts, as on the V&A tray. The V&A tray shows a further development, however, since there the base line of the main inscription was flipped, so that the long uprights in the lettering point inward, as they do in the epigraphic sunbursts. In this way, the whole upper surface of the V&A tray was turned into one huge sunburst.

On the tray of Sultan Dawud, the sun is shown in the prime position in the heavens. On the Doha tray, the inscriptions in the same position, arranged as a sunburst, tell us that the sultan holds the same prime position in his realm. On the V&A tray, the references are almost entirely solar, and these, too, may be taken as referring to the sun-like pre-eminence of the sultan within Mamluk society, following the model offered by James Allan.[15]

As Fig. 9.3 shows, trays with designs very similar to that of the V&A example were produced for at least two of Sultan Muhammad's sons in the 1340s – Sultan Isma'il ibn Muhammad (r.1342–45),[16] and Sultan Sha'ban (r.1345–46).[17] This was a period of very rapid changes of ruler, and the seventh son of Sultan Muhammad to succeed him was Sultan Hasan (r.1347–51, 1354–61), who, like his father, bore the regnal title al-Malik al-Nasir and the *laqab* Nasir al-Dunya wa'l-Din. Given the other evidence for the use of the design found on the V&A tray in the 1340s, it is clearly possible that the V&A tray was made for Sultan Hasan rather than his father. In any case, the tray is unlikely to date after 1382, when the continuity of rule by descendants of Muhammad ibn Qalawun was broken. By this time, too, the production of inlaid metalwork for Mamluk clients had declined to insignificance.[18]

Venice

In 1886, Lane-Poole noted that three of the six medallions in the narrow band framing the pattern of overlapping arches contained epigraphic blazons, while the other three contained 'on a shield, an antelope in an enclosure'.[19] Lane-Poole makes no further comment, but this is in fact a Venetian coat-of-arms, which has been scaled down to fit inside the small roundels, and its diminutive size makes it relatively hard to spot amid the tray's rich decoration. As a consequence, no further reference has been made to it in print.

The shield displaying the arms is of a type developed for jousting tournaments, with a notch in the upper left corner to accommodate the lance (Plate 8). This was particularly favoured for the presentation of arms in the fifteenth century.[20] The shield is divided horizontally into two halves – 'party per fess' in the language of heraldry

used in England. The charge is a rampant, that is rearing, beast, which has a pointed snout, two small ears and a short tail. The use of silver inlay indicates that the charge was 'counterchanged', that is one colour, or 'tincture', was used for the lower half of the shield and the upper part of the beast, which are both inlaid with silver, and another for the upper half of the shield and the lower half of the beast, which are unadorned brass. Arms with counterchanging are relatively common in Venetian armorials but much rarer in those for other Italian cities, and this is part of the reason for presuming that the arms on the tray belong to a Venetian family.[21]

FIG. 9.3 Tray made for Sultan Isma'il ibn Muhammad, Egypt or Syria, 1342–45, signed by Hamid ibn 'Abdallah ibn 'Abd al-Qadir, diameter 85cm. Formerly in the Homberg collection.

It is possible that the beast represented in the arms is a fox, which was used in their arms by several Venetian families, including the Griego, whose arms are suitably counterchanged.[22] The beast on the tray, however, has a shorter tail than the one in the Griego arms, where a long and bushy brush rises behind the fox's back. A more convincing identification is with the short-tailed animal, presumably a dog, found in the arms of Zane.[23] In these arms, the field is 'per fess azure and argent', that is, blue above and white below, and the charge is rampant and counterchanged. The arms on the tray seem to be a rendition of this in metalwork, using real silver for the argent, and leaving the brass to stand for azure.

We can conclude, then, that if the tray was not exported to Italy in the fourteenth century, it was certainly there by the fifteenth, when the Zane family of Venice added its arms to it. Indeed, as Rachel Ward has shown, the fashion for inlaid metalwork in Italy was so strong that it sustained this type of Mamluk production long after the 1370s, when the local demand for it disappeared.[24] This admiration for Mamluk metalwork was reborn in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, when the known history of the tray resumes as the result of its purchase by the V&A.[25]

PART 2: A MODEL OF GOOD DESIGN

The V&A began as a collection of objects used as models by students of the London School of Design, the forerunner of the Royal College of Art, which opened in 1837.[26] In 1851 the world's first international exposition, the Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, was held in Hyde Park in London, and in the wake of this event, usually known as the Great Exhibition, the School of Design's collection was refounded as a public museum. Its task was to collect and display examples of good design for a wider audience, 'first, the Artist or student; secondly, the Manufacturer or producer; and lastly, the Public generally'.[27] This last was important because British industrial design was considered to be in need of radical improvement, and this could only be achieved if there was demand at home for the better-designed goods needed to compete in international markets.

The new museum's first acquisitions were contemporary manufactures from the Great Exhibition, but it soon began to collect historical items, including examples from the Islamic Middle East. Among the first purchases in this field was the large tray once owned by the Zane family of Venice. For reasons discussed below, the information the museum holds on this purchase is meagre, being limited to the following entry in the accession register: 'Salver in brass, circular, damascened with gold and silver, decorated with foliated ornaments and inscriptions in Arabic characters. *Arabic* or *Saracenic*.

14th or 15th centy. Diam. 31 in. Bought, 40*l.*' The object does, however, exemplify the qualities that led the museum's founders to purchase items made in the Islamic world, as is clear from their statements on collecting policy.

In 1852 the revamped School of Design and its expanded collection of artefacts, soon known as the Museum of Ornamental Art, moved to a temporary home in Marlborough House, Pall Mall. The inaugural lectures there were delivered by the architect and art theorist Owen Jones (1809–74), who probably knew more about what he called 'Arabian art', and which we now call 'Islamic art', than anyone else in Britain at this time.[28] Jones had made a name for himself through his study of the Alhambra in Granada, undertaken with his French colleague Jules Goury, and his publication of this monument after Goury's death from cholera in 1834.[29] Jones took personal control of the printing process, using the new technique of chromolithography, which allowed him to reproduce the colour used in the decoration of the building, or, rather, his reconstruction of it. For Jones's primary concern had been the use of colour in architecture, the subject of much debate in the 1830s and later.

Jones's expertise in the field of architectural decoration was recognised by the organisers of the Great Exhibition of 1851, and he was invited to devise the interior decoration for the Crystal Palace, the enormous iron and glass pavilion used for the Exhibition, and to supervise the arrangement of the displays. He later joined Henry Cole, Richard Redgrave and A.W.N. Pugin on the Design Purchase Committee, which selected the items to be bought for the new museum from the Great Exhibition,[30] and the following year he was invited to give the inaugural lectures at Marlborough House, which he entitled *The True and the False in the Decorative Arts*.[31]

Arabian art

Jones's view of the art of the Islamic world in 1852 was strongly influenced by the experience he had gained through travel in Egypt, Turkey and Spain and by the access he had had through the Great Exhibition to contemporary production, especially from India. For Jones, the Arabian style was one of 'several well-marked primary styles', on a par with Gothic, and both had given birth 'to their secondaries and tertiaries'. In the case of the Arabian style, these secondaries and tertiaries were 'its several phases in Egypt, in Turkey, in Spain, in India'.[32]

It is clear from other references that for Jones, Egypt was the home of Arabian art, Turkey of Turkish art, and Spain of Moorish art,[33] while in *The Grammar of Ornament* of 1856, Jones's most famous and lastingly important publication, India was the home of both 'Indian' and 'Hindoo' art, from which we understand that 'Indian art' was Jones's

name for the Islamic art of South Asia. By 1856, too, a fifth category, Persian art, had also made an appearance, having become available to Jones through a major illustrated publication from Paris, the *Voyage en Perse* of Eugène Flandin and Pascal Coste, issued in six volumes between 1851 and 1854.

Jones's knowledge of 'Arabian' art was matched by his high regard for it, as his lectures show. 'The religion of Mohammed,' he informed his audience, 'which spread over the East with meteor-like rapidity, produced with equal speed an art in unison with its poetic and imaginative doctrines.' The result was 'a species of decoration as original as it was magical in effect'.[34] We understand from this that Britain needed to imitate the followers of Islam, who 'still practise the art which grew up with their civilisation',[35] in order to rescue itself from the mire of bad taste in which Jones and his colleagues believed it was sunk.[36]

At the beginning of the second lecture, Jones summarised the contents of the first in ten principles, concluding that, 'We further endeavoured to show how these principles appear to have been observed in the best periods of Art, and by none so much as by the Mohammedan races, who always appear to work in humble imitation of Nature's work, but who, at the same time, avoid any direct transcript from them.'[37]

Structuring designs after models found in nature while avoiding the illusionistic representation of nature in those designs was fundamental to Jones's approach, and it is something he learned from his study of 'Arabian' art in the eastern Mediterranean and Spain. It is therefore not going too far to interpret this paragraph as saying, 'Arabian art is best.' The prominence of these comments in the lectures of 1852 should not, though, be overstated, for Jones was primarily engaged in setting out a series of propositions for the improvement of architectural and other forms of decoration.

From theory to practice

As Jones declined to join the staff of the refounded School of Design or the new museum and continued in private practice, his ideas on the nature of good design were absorbed by the new institutions through the agency of his colleagues from the Great Exhibition, notably Henry Cole, the first director of the museum, and the artist Richard Redgrave, who supervised the national network of schools of design.[38] The sharing of ideas by these three men can be detected in the report they prepared in May 1852 on their purchases for the new museum from the Great Exhibition. There we find, for example, that 'the Paris shawl, by Duché Aimé (W120), was rewarded by the Jurors as a triumph of manufacture, but its direct imitations of natural objects appear to the Committee to be of very inferior design to the ruder scarfs of Tunis, or the Kimkhobs of Ahmedabad.'[39]

It is also made manifest by the set of 'General Principles of Decorative Art' prepared by Redgrave, probably for use in the schools, of which the first three were borrowed almost verbatim from Jones.[40]

As purveyors of principles, Cole, Redgrave, Jones and Pugin (who died in September 1852) were not universally admired. They were seen as a self-serving clique by at least one contemporary,[41] and it is often difficult to detect how the work they and their students produced accorded with their theories. Indeed, they have been derided as design elitists who used their much-vaunted principles to assert their superiority over the 'bad taste' of the middle classes while ignoring these principles in practice.[42] A more flattering view emerged in the late 1940s, when Redgrave, Jones and their contemporary Matthew Digby Wyatt's writings were separated from their output as painter and architects, and they were recognised as pioneers of the Modern Movement.[43]

In view of this, and as much of Jones's approach was derived from his observation of Islamic art, it is possible to see a link between the admiration for Islamic art promoted by Jones in the mid-nineteenth century and major changes in design that occurred in the twentieth. It would be pleasing to say, too, that there was a seamless link between Jones's promotion of Islamic art and the V&A's collecting activities in the 1850s, when examples of Islamic art such as the Mamluk tray began to be acquired on a regular basis. There is, though, a major impediment to plotting this link, which is the working practices of John Charles Robinson, another great figure in the early history of the V&A.

Robinson was appointed curator in 1853, but his relationship with Henry Cole soon deteriorated and remained consistently poor. They disagreed profoundly on policy, and Robinson considered his talents and contribution were not adequately recognised and rewarded. Eventually, in 1862, Robinson lost his post as curator and became one of the three 'art referees' who advised the museum on purchases without holding office within it. Robinson had even more reason to be resentful, and his disputes with Cole continued. This led to Robinson ceasing all connection with the museum in 1867, although he continued to play an important part in the formation of public and private collections in Britain until the early years of the next century.[44]

Robinson's contribution to the development of the new museum's collection in the years 1853–67 was enormous, but we often have scant information on his acquisitions before 1863, as he wrote very little down before he became an art referee. As Helen Davies has written, until 1862 Robinson

> did not have to make detailed reports on each work of art considered for purchase. The published Annual Reports of the Department of Science and Art simply listed objects bought with their prices, and there is little or no evidence about the provenance of many of those bought before 1863, or indeed who was responsible for their selection. However, Robinson was generally in charge of both selection and acquisition.[45]

For his view on the acquisition of Islamic items we therefore have to turn to his more general writings, and there we find him expressing a very catholic view of what should be acquired, at least in his earliest years at the museum. In 'An Introductory Lecture on the Museum of Ornamental Art', published in 1854, he listed 'the inlaid metal-work and filagree-work [sic] of the East' among the types of metalwork that it was desirable to collect, gave equal weight to 'beautiful oriental and mediæval fabrics' and made flattering mention of non-European woodwork.[46]

From these rather sparse comments, and from the museum's eager acquisition of Islamic items such as the Mamluk tray, purchased in the same year, we gather that in 1854 Robinson shared the high opinion of Islamic art promoted by Owen Jones and espoused by Cole and Redgrave. Later Robinson continued to purchase Islamic and other Asian items, but his public utterances betray his personal preference for the art of Britain's European neighbours. Indeed, he was not above using the high opinion of the art of the 'East' shared by Henry Cole and allies in a casuistical manner to defend his purchase of antiquarian objects from Europe.[47]

CONCLUSION

The inscriptions and other ornament on the V&A tray show where and when it was made, and the writings of Owen Jones and John Charles Robinson tell us why it was acquired for the museum in 1854, even if we cannot know where and when precisely it was bought. The detection of the Venetian coat-of-arms on the tray allows us to link these two pieces of information. In the early 1850s, Robinson's purchases were made exclusively in Europe, and hitherto it has not been clear how he would have had access to the tray. The evidence that it had moved to Italy by the fifteenth century, provided by the addition of the arms of Zane, shows that the tray was in Europe at an early date, and we may presume that from Venice it eventually made its way on to the market for antiquarian items.

NOTES

1 I received the most generous help from Rachel Ward in writing this article, and I am very grateful to her. My thanks go, too, to Donal Cooper and Peta Motture for their assistance with the Venetian coat of arms, and to Doris Behrens-Abouseif for her helpful comments.

2 My thanks to Donna Stevens in Metalwork Conservation at the V&A for this information, and the photograph used as Plate 7.

3 See Lane-Poole 1886: 229; Allan 1984: 92–93 (p. 85, n. 1).

4 The Arabic is, *'izz li-mawlana al-sultan al-malik al-'alim al-'amil al-'adil al-ghazi 'azza nasruhu*, following Allan's superior reading.

5 Allan did not note the three blazons with *al-Malik al-Nasir*.

6 Allan read *al-Malik al-Nasir* as *al-malik*, which had consequences for his dating of this object. On the basis of his reading of the inscriptions, Allan dated the V&A tray to the period 1361–82 in his 1984 article. As the only regnal name he found on the tray was *al-Malik al-Mansur*, he concluded that the tray was made under al-Malik al-Mansur Muhammad (r.1361–63) or al-Malik al-Mansur 'Ali (r.1376–82).

7 An important example is the inscriptions on the *kursi*, or stand, commissioned by Sultan Muhammad for the hospital of his father, Sultan Qalawun (Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no 139); see Wiet 1932: 14–18, Pls I, II; O'Kane 2006b: 154–55, no 137.

8 Lane-Poole 1886: 229.

9 Ward 2004.

10 See n. 7 above.

11 Ward 2004a: 64–65.

12 Metropolitan Museum of Art, 91.1.605. See also 91.1.602 and 91.1.604 in the same collection. All three are from the bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891, and are available on the 'Islamic Art' database at www.metmuseum.org (consulted April 2011). The tray 91.1.602 was published by Atıl 1981b: 80–81, no 22. For illustrations of all three trays, see Porter 1987: 234–35.

13 Museum of Islamic Art, MW.35.1998; see Allan 2002: 90–5, no 29. An example of the same overall layout but with figurative decoration was made for Sultan Yusuf, the Rasulid ruler of Yemen between 1250 and 1295 (Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no 15.153); see Atıl 1981b: 62–63, no 14; O'Kane 2006b: 116–17, no 102.

14 Galleria Provinciale della Sicilia, inv. no 7278; see Staacke 1997: 84–87, no 9.

15 See, for example, his analysis of the incense-burner of Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun (now Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, MW.467.2007) in Allan 1982: 86–89, no 15, and, most relevantly, the tray illustrated in Fig. 9.2 in Allan 2002 (see n. 13 above). For a more recent version of Allan's thinking, see Allan 2003b: 37–42, and for reasons why this imagery was used, see Allan 2005c: 37–38.

16 Fig. 9.3 is reproduced from *Catalogue des objets d'art et de haute curiosité orientaux & européens… composant la collection de feu M.O. Homberg et dont la vente aura lieu à Paris*, Galerie Georges Petit, 8, rue de Sèze, du Lundi 11 au Samedi 16 Mai 1908, à 2 heures, p. 48, no 38 and plate. A related tray is in the Galleria Provinciale della Sicilia, Palermo, inv. no 7277; see Staacke 1997: 92–4, no 11.

17 British Museum, London, OA 1866.12-29.60; see Ward 1993: Pl. 1.

18 Allan 1984.

19 Lane-Poole 1886: 229.

20 Information from Donal Cooper and Rachel Ward.

21 Information from Donal Cooper.

22 Orsini de Marzo 2007: 104. My thanks to Donal Cooper for this reference.

23 Orsini de Marzo 2007: 197.

24 Ward 2007: 263–84. The story is less precisely told in Mack 2002: 239–47.

25 On similar admiration for Mamluk metalwork at the British Museum, see Ward 1997 and Ward 2000.

26 Burton 1999. Burton gives almost no attention to the formation of the important Asian collections of the V&A, for which see Mitter and Clunas 1997, and Ashmore 2008.

27 Robinson 1854: 18–19.

28 See Darby 1996, Hoskins 2004, Ashmore 2008, and the publications listed in n. 3 of Ashmore's article.

29 Jones and Goury 1842–45.

30 Their *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Board of Trade for the Disposal of the Parliamentary Grant of 5000l. for the Purchase of Articles from the Exhibition of 1851*, dated 17 May 1852, was published many times. The copy consulted here is Appendix A in Robinson 1856: 117ff. See Ashmore 2008 for further details of the committee's work.

31 Jones 1863. Another indication of Owen Jones's involvement in the setting up of the museum is the inclusion of his 'Observations' in the front-matter of *A Catalogue of the Articles of Ornamental Art, Selected from the Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations in 1851, and Purchased by the Government* (London, 1852): 6–9, where they follow a copy of the *Report* referred to in the previous note.

32 Jones 1863: 6–7. For comparable views expressed by Jones in other publications at this date, see Ashmore 2008.

33 Jones 1863: 102, for example.

34 Jones 1863: 14–15.

35 Jones 1863: 15.

36 Jones 1863: 100–12.

37 Jones 1863: 46.

38 See Cooper 2004 and Heleniak 2004.

39 See appendix A in Robinson 1856: 118.

40 Burton 1988: 64–65.

41 Burton 1988: 64.

42 Burton 1988: 61, 67.

43 Burton 1988: 61.

44 Davies 2004.

45 Davies 1998: 170.

46 Robinson 1854: 12–13.

47 Robinson 1858: 5–6.

10

ARABIC TITLES, WELL-WISHES AND A FEMALE SAINT: A MAMLUK BASIN IN THE RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM

LUITGARD MOLS

Mamluk metalwork produced for European markets has received considerable attention over the past three decades.[1] However, one object that has not received the attention it deserves is a brass basin acquired by the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam in the late nineteenth century (inv. no N.M. 7474; Fig. 10.1).[2] How and from whom it was acquired is unknown. The basin combines Mamluk decoration with European coats of arms and a Latin inscription. In the early twentieth century, Italy, Sicily, Egypt and Syria were all suggested as possible places of production, as were different dates ranging from the late thirteenth to the sixteenth century.[3] In 1910, Van der Put had already connected the coats of arms with Elisabeth of Habsburg-Carinthia (c.1300–c.1350), wife of Peter II of Aragon, king of Sicily (crowned in 1321, ruled as sole king from 1337 to 1342), but this attribution was long ignored and only revisited by scholars in the late twentieth century.[4] According to this identification of the shields, the basin would have been made between 1323, the year of their marriage, and c.1350, when Elisabeth died. Interest in this basin was reawakened by the preparation of the exhibition *Trade Goods and Souvenirs: Islamic Art from the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam*, held at the Museum of Antiquities (RMO) in Leiden in 2011.[5] Both the technique, which is characterised by its absence of silver inlay, and the combination of Mamluk iconography with European elements begs questions about the extent to which the basin conformed to a standard Mamluk repertoire. It is also interesting to consider the significance of the Latin inscription.

As far as shape, size and manufacturing techniques are concerned, the basin sits comfortably with a larger group of Mamluk basins, the majority of which were produced

FIG. 10.1 Basin of Elisabeth of Carinthia, 1323–50, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, BK-NM-7474. Photograph © Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

in the fourteenth century (see the Appendix for an overview of the comparable objects produced between the late thirteenth and mid-fourteenth centuries).[6] The Rijksmuseum basin measures 19.6cm high by 46.8cm in diameter (33cm at the base) and has an almost flat base with upright sides which flare out near the top and terminate in a profiled rim.[7] It was beaten from a single sheet of brass, after which decoration on its exterior and interior was applied through engraving, undercutting and stippling. The other basins in the group were either cast or beaten; the majority were inlaid with silver. This form is known from late Ayyubid times, though a single Fatimid specimen also exists.[8] Their patrons were mostly Mamluk sultans and amirs, whose names and titles were broadcast in large inscription bands that make up most of the decoration. Two of them – the Rijksmuseum basin, and the basin made for Hughes de Lusignan, now in the Louvre (inv. no MAO 101) – carry inscriptions and coats of arms that can be identified with particular European owners.[9] Some specimens carry anonymous titles only, combinations of titles and well-wishes, or have exteriors that are entirely filled with figurative imagery.[10] In the Middle East, such basins were probably used as

ablution basins, in which the basin (*tisht*) would be accompanied by a cover with holes and a ewer (*ibriq*) from which water would be poured.[11] A fourteenth-century ewer-and-basin set with matching decoration was found in an excavation in Qus (Upper Egypt).[12] Basins exported to Europe might have served a similar function, or been adapted to specific local needs: one fourteenth-century Mamluk basin in the treasury of Treviso Cathedral, for example, was adapted to serve as a holy-water bucket.[13]

With respect to its technique, the Rijksmuseum basin differs from most examples in the group since it does not feature silver inlay in its decoration. Dotted lines flanking the engraving and lower undercut areas on its surface suggest the basin had been prepared to receive inlay, but technical analysis using x-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF) did not reveal a single trace of inlay.[14] Even though the surface of the basin had been severely polished, one would nevertheless expect trace amounts of inlay to remain in the undercut areas.[15] As an unfinished product, the basin is not unique: absence of silver inlay also characterises a basin with figurative decoration in the L.A. Memorial Institute in Jerusalem (inv. no M 58).[16] This probably never received inlay because of a vertical crack that extends from just under the flaring rim into the decorative frieze.[17] Furthermore, its interior was left undecorated, which is uncommon on Bahri basins and also suggests that the basin was unfinished.[18] Irrespective of the crack, this vessel was not melted down: it might have served as a show-piece displaying the proficiency of the metalworker to new customers, or a model for future pieces. The absence of silver on the Rijksmuseum basin, which does not show any production flaws, is perhaps explained by lack of money, an appreciation of its beauty even without the reflective surface, or haste on the buyer's part.

Both the arrangement and style of its interior decoration are clearly related to other Mamluk basins from the Bahri period (1250–1382). The upper part of its interior walls are adorned with a broad inscription band with Arabic text against a background of floral scrolls that is divided by medallions. This type of arrangement blossomed during the third reign of Sultan Nasir al-Din Muhammad (r.1310–41), when figurative imagery disappeared or moved into the background.[19] Although an overall decorated surface on both the interior and exterior was more common, a number of brass basins made for Mamluk and European patrons show comparable empty interiors.[20] Moreover, the two narrow decorative friezes between the horizontal band and the rim – one with flying birds and six-petalled rosettes with overlapping petals, the other with a simple geometric design of a roundel alternating with a lozenge-shape – are typically Mamluk and correspond with metal vessels from the first half of the fourteenth century. The same Mamluk imprint is visible in the band of lancet leaves pointing downwards below the inscription and the medallion at the bottom of the basin, surrounded by lancet leaves, and filled with whirling fishes and circles.[21] All these features find a striking parallel in a basin in the Brooklyn Museum (no 11 in the Appendix), which unfortunately

provides only anonymous titles. Remarkable on the Rijksmuseum basin is the absence of chinoiserie motifs and radial inscriptions, elements that came into vogue on Mamluk vessels in the 1330s and would certainly be expected on a basin datable to the second quarter of the fourteenth century.[22] Was the metalworker slower in adjusting to new trends, or was he perhaps copying an older model?

However, the medallions that punctuate the Arabic inscription on the interior are incongruous with those on basins made for Mamluk patrons at this period. In the first half of the fourteenth century, scenes of the princely cycle were largely replaced by medallions filled with floral designs, epigraphy or blazons.[23] However, on the Rijksmuseum basin three seated crowned rulers alternate with three shields containing coats of arms (Fig. 10.2). While crowned rulers are absent on basins for Mamluk patrons – probably because the sultan did not wear a crown[24] – figurative imagery of this type is found on other Mamluk metal vessels made for European patrons.[25] The shields containing European coats of arms reiterate the connection with a European patron. The shield is pointed and divided vertically in two halves: the left-hand half is divided into four sections, two of which are filled by an eagle, the other two by poles; the right-hand side features three lions and an eagle. As has already been noted, these combined arms can be associated with Elisabeth of Habsburg-Carinthia after her marriage to Peter II of Aragon in 1323. The way the shields are embedded into their medallions, almost filling them except for a small space near the sides, is incongruous with the way blazons of fourteenth-century Mamluk or Rasulid patrons were depicted, these being generally much smaller and surrounded by

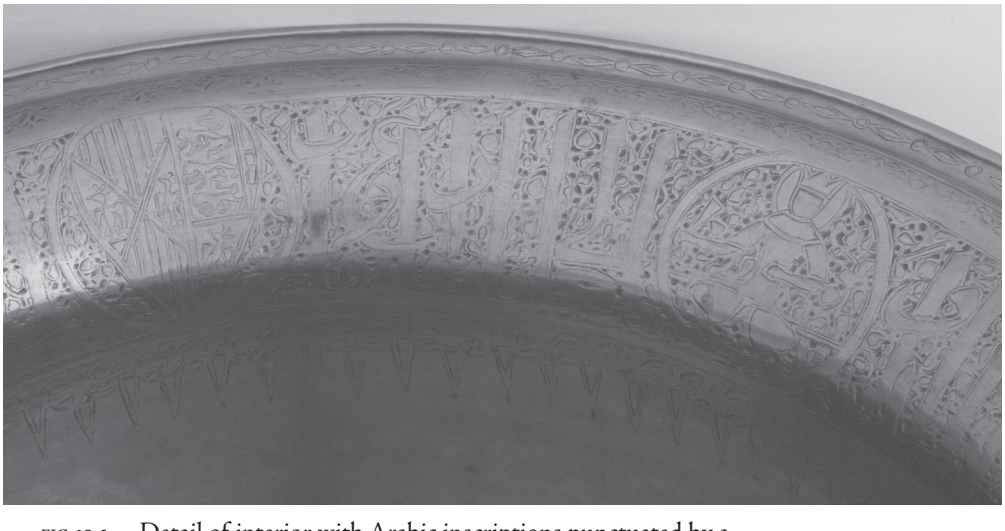

FIG. 10.2 Detail of interior with Arabic inscriptions punctuated by a roundel with figurative imagery and one with a European coats of arms. Photograph © Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

FIG. 10.3 Detail of exterior with Gothic Latin inscription and coats of arms of Elisabeth of Carinthia. Photograph © Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

floral motifs such as lotus-flowers. The size on the Rijksmuseum basin corresponds more closely with that of shields on later metalwork vessels made for the European market.[26]

The same shields filled with coats of arms are also found on the exterior of the basin where they divide up a narrow epigraphic band filled with a Latin inscription (Fig. 10.3). Stylistically, the inscription bands on both the interior and exterior are related to two different traditions: on the interior, the band is broad with the Arabic text in large *thulth* with a background of floral designs, in typical Mamluk fashion; on the exterior, however, the band is narrow and filled with a Latin text against an empty background, while the remainder of the lower part is left void. One finds comparable voids on the exterior of some other Mamluk basins as well as a spouted bowl.[27] But an even more striking parallel is found in the simple Latin text-bands on the exterior of medieval European vessels, which combine the void background against which the inscriptions are set with an overall empty aesthetic. Examples include objects connected to water such as holy-water fonts and washing basins, but also mortars and brass bells.[28] It suggests that the person ordering the basin intended to imitate the current European tradition of base metalwork and may even have brought a model (on paper?) with him.

Previous studies have referred to the content of the Arabic inscriptions as general well-wishes that did not require further analysis.[29] The text reads as follows:

العز والنصر للدعاء للماجد الطيب الـ

لثناء والمجد والجد وا لمعالي [...]

لمالكي المال لك المقر الـ [...]

'Glory and victory permanence [?] / for the noble, the good, the / [??] and splendour and fortune and / his excellency […] / *l-maliki al-mal* / *lik* the authority *al*[…]'

The text combines anonymous titles (referring both to an amir and the sultan), benedictory wishes and pseudo-inscriptions or simply mistakes, and thus differs from the usual contemporary Mamluk epigraphy.[30] Although well-wishes were still part of the epigraphic repertoire in the second half of the thirteenth century, they became rare on fourteenth-century vessels intended for Mamluk patrons, and a combination of the two in one line is rare if not unique.[31] Moreover, the order of the titles is different from Mamluk titulature: *al-maqarr* (the authority) usually precedes *al-maliki*, but here it follows it. This eclecticism suggests the inscription was meant to be decorative rather than meaningful, which would make it entirely suitable for a European patron who would have enjoyed the exotic appearance of the Arabic. Given the identification of the coats of arms, it is also interesting to note that the titles refer to a man rather than a woman, again implying they were not intended to be understood.

Remarkably, the Arabic inscription is not unique, as at least part of it was also used on a possibly contemporary plate in the Louvre (inv. no MAO 1227; Fig. 10.4),

FIG. 10.4 Plate with the coats of arms of the Lusignan family, Paris, Louvre (inv. no MAO 1227). Photograph © RMN/René-Gabriel Ojéda.

which carries the coats of arms of the Lusignan family on Cyprus.[32] More parallels between these two objects are found in the relatively empty field, and the presence of a seated crowned ruler. The simplicity of the chosen titles on both the plate and the basin suggests that a single workshop was responsible for manufacturing both objects, as well as for choosing the content of the titles. If the court had been involved and the objects intended as (diplomatic) gifts, one would have expected the use of titles that were common in diplomatic correspondence with European rulers and more in keeping with usual protocols; but these titles do not match those documented for diplomatic correspondence by the legal scholar and secretary in the Mamluk chancery, al-Qalqashandi (1355–1418), in his *Subh al-a'sha fi sina'at al-insha'* (*Daybreak for the Sufferer of Night-blindness in Composing Official Documents*).[33]

The Latin text on the exterior is in Gothic capital letters that were in use between 1250 and 1350. It reads, 'MENTEM : SP / ONTANIE : ONOREM : D/EI : PATREM : LIB / ERACIONIS.'[34] This is a variant of a well-known epitaph of St Agatha, and can be translated as follows: 'She had a holy and generous soul, gave honour to God, and accomplished the liberation of her country.'[35] Agatha came from an important Christian family from the city of Catania in Sicily, and was a female martyr who died in 251 after being severely tortured on the orders of the Roman prefect Quintianus. When her body was placed in a sarcophagus by fellow Christians, an unknown man appeared in white garments and laid a marble inscription, reading 'Mentem sanctam spontaneam honorem Deo et patriae liberationem.' When, a year after her death, Mount Etna erupted and lava threatened to swallow the town, the inhabitants of Catania fled to Agatha's grave, where they lifted the veil that covered her sarcophagus and held it in front of the lava flow. The flow miraculously stopped and Agatha was celebrated as the town's saviour; within a year, she was declared a saint. Besides being the patron saint of Catania, her protection was also invoked against volcanic eruptions and fire in general; as a result, she also became the patron saint of metalworkers and bell-founders. Moreover, she was venerated as protector of women and children. Sicily remained a strong centre for the worship of St Agatha, and her cult became particularly popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. A fourteenth-century statue of her in the city of Catania carries an identical inscription at its base.[36]

From the thirteenth century onwards, variations of her epitaph became popular inscriptions on objects. The earliest dated example is from 1208, on the bell of a clock-tower in Ravenna. Other instances of the same inscription on bells are found in France, Spain, England and Germany.[37] The connection with bells derives from their multiple functions: inviting people to prayer and simultaneously chasing away storms, lightning, demons and even evil thoughts.[38] The combination of the clock and inscription must thus have been considered a powerful protection.

What Elisabeth of Carinthia and St Agatha have in common is the city of Catania, where Peter II and Elisabeth had their residence. We might ask whether a particular historic event or disaster propelled Elisabeth to order and use the metal basin for talismanic purposes. In fact, in the fourteenth century Mount Etna erupted several times, in 1329, 1333, 1350 and 1381; the first three dates coincide with the life of Elisabeth of Carinthia.[39] Was the basin's commission a personal protective wish against danger, possibly including her children, two of whom died young? Or did Elisabeth, who had been actively involved in politics both during her husband's reign and after his death in 1342, identify herself with St Agatha as the liberator of the country?[40] The location of the Latin inscription on the exterior emphasises its importance, though its placement may equally have been inspired by the tradition of inscribing the same phrase on the exterior of bells, to warn people in case of danger. In contrast, in the Islamic tradition, inscriptions for talismanic purposes were more often located on the inside of basins or bowls, so that the liquid contents transferred the beneficent qualities to the person who drank from them.[41]

The question arises whether the decoration, including the Arabic inscription, was applied by a Mamluk metalworker before the basin was taken to Sicily, where it received its Latin inscription and coats of arms from a local craftsman. However, the strong resemblance between the engraving and stippling on both interior and exterior indicates that it was done by one person, presumably a Mamluk metalworker. His achievement in copying the Latin inscription was remarkable, for there are no mistakes. In this it differs from the famous basin made for Hughes de Lusignan, on which two different preparatory techniques for inlaying suggest two hands were responsible for its decoration, one Mamluk, the other presumably Cypriot.[42]

CONCLUSION

The mix of Mamluk and European decorative motifs on the Rijksmuseum basin exemplifies the intercultural exchange between the Christian and Islamic worlds in the fourteenth century. The basin is remarkable in evincing a strong Sicilian flavour with its coats of arms and Latin inscription, which projects a political or religious-talismanic meaning. The European-style decorative motifs on the Rijksmuseum basin suggest that a Sicilian or Italian merchant, traveller or pilgrim – perhaps en route to or on his way back from the Holy Land, in which case the city of Damascus would seem the most obvious place of manufacture – took a drawing of the coat of arms and the Latin inscription with him, for the Mamluk metalworker to copy. In layout and execution, the Latin text follows European examples. These features associate it with a group of

fourteenth-century metalwork vessels ordered by foreign patrons. With their typical Mamluk shapes and technical execution, these earlier vessels still conform to the vessels made for Mamluk patrons, but the choice of eclectic inscriptions and figurative royal imagery implies that the metalworkers were well aware of different tastes and were ready to adjust to foreign wishes. They predate the large group of mostly anonymous metalwork vessels made for the open market in the second half of the fourteenth century and during the fifteenth, whose shapes and decoration (for the most part devoid of inscriptions but filled with arabesques, geometric designs, shields and animal combat scenes) were entirely adapted to the tastes of the Italian market.

APPENDIX

	Date	Patron	Current location	Ht (cm)	Diam. (cm)	Literature
1	1280–1330	Anonymous	New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 91.1.553	11.4	32.4	
2	1290–1330	Amir Sayf al-Din Bahadur	Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, 3751	19.0	47.0	Wiet 1984: 89–90
3	1299–1340	Muhammad b. Qalawun	Doha, Museum of Islamic Art	17.7	43.6	Allan 2002: 64–67
4	1299–1340	Amir of al-Malik al-Nasir Muhammad	Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, 3400	14.0	27.0	Wiet 1984: 87
5	1299–1340	Sultan al-Malik al-Nasir Muhammad	Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, 3937	27.0	57.0	Wiet 1984: 96–98
6	1300 (circa)	Anonymous	London, Victoria & Albert Museum, 740-1898	18.5	42.5	Atıl 1981: 68–71
7	1300–1350	Anonymous	Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, 15041	19.0	44.0	O'Kane 2006: 144–145
8	1300–1350	Anonymous titles of amir	London, Keir Collection	13.0	35.3	Fehérvári 1976: 125 (no 153), Pl. 52a
9	1300–1350 (?)	Anonymous	Jerusalem, L.A. Mayer Memorial Institute, M 58	21.0	58.0	Bloom 1987: 15–26
10	1300–1350	Anonymous titles of amir (al-Nasiri)	LA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M 73.5.125	20.3	46.0	*Arts of Islam* 1976: 188-89, no 213
11	1300–1350	Anonymous titles of amir	New York, Brooklyn Museum, 73.94.4	?	?	
12	1300–1350	Anonymous titles of amir	New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 91.1.587	?	41.5	
13	1312–1340	Amir Tankiz	Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, 7852	20.0	44.0	Wiet 1984: 133-34
14	1320–1339	Amir Rukn al-Din Baybars Awhadi	Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, 9020	18.0	34.0	Wiet 1984: 147
15	1321–1363	Sultan al-Mujahid Sayf al-Din Ali (Rasulid)	New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 91.1.589	21.6	46.5	Ward 1999: 120
16	1323–1350	Elizabeth of Carinthia	Amsterdam, The Rijksmuseum, 7474	19.6	46.8	Kuile 1986: 356–57; Ward 1989: 597

TABLE. 10.1 List of Mamluk basins (1250–1361).

	Date	Patron	Current location	Ht (cm)	Diam. (cm)	Literature
17	1324–1359	Hugh IV de Lusignan, king of Cyprus	Paris, Louvre, MAO 101	27.5	57.0	Rice (1956); Welch (1979): 84–85
18	1325–1350	Amir al-Malik al-Nasir	St. Louis, St Louis Art Museum, 50:1927	23.5	55.6	Welch (1979): 82–83
19	1330–1341	Muhammad b. Qalawun	London, British Museum, OA 1851-1-4,1	22.7	53.6	Ward (1993): 111; Atıl (1981): 88–91
20	1330–1345	Amir Qushtimur, majordomo of Toquztimur	Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, 15038	19.7	44.0	Atıl (1981): 92–93; O'Kane (2006): 117
21	1330–1350	Muhammad ibn Qalawun	Naples, Museo do Capodimonte, 112109/1145			Scerrato (1966): 128–29
22	1330–1350 (formerly also 1290–1310)	Anonymous (Baptistère de Saint Louis)	Paris, Louvre, LP 16;	20.2	50.2	Atıl (1981): 76-79; Behrens-Abouseif (1988–89); Rice (1951); Ward (1999)
23	1345–1346	Sultan Kamil Sha'ban	Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, 9024	22.0	46.0	Wiet (1984): 147
24	1347–51 and 1354–61	Officer of al-Malik al-Nasir Hasan	Doha, Museum of Islamic Art	17.9	43.9	Allan (2002): 68–69
25	1350 (mid-C14th)	Amir Tabtaq, an officer of Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf or Tuqtay	Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, 24085	18.2	44.0	O'Kane (2006): 108, no 93; Atıl (1981): 94–95

TABLE. 10.1 (cont.)

NOTES

1 Allan 1989c; Allan 1994; Auld 1989; Auld 2004; Ward 1989; Ward 1999; Ward 2007; Weyl Carr 2005.

2 It was James Allan who first brought this object to my attention, during my internship at the Ashmolean Museum in 1994. I am grateful for his enthusiastic encouragement over the years.

3 When acquired in the nineteenth century, the Rijksmuseum basin was thought to be of sixteenth-century Italian production, but different dates and provenances were suggested in the early twentieth century: Kalf 1901/1902: 303 associated the coats of arms with King Frederic II of Sicily (r.1296–1337). According to Migeon 1907, vol. II: 190, who identified the basin's coats of arms with Aragon, Sicily and Swabia, the object could only have been manufactured after the marriage of Peter III of Aragon with Constantia (1249–1302), daughter of Manfred of Sicily, which took place in 1262 but which he mistakenly placed in 1282. In the Munich Exhibition of 1910, the vessel was labelled as fifteenth-century Egyptian. Rice 1956: 399, n. 1 followed Migeon's attribution; while ter Kuile 1986: 356–57 and Ward 1989 and 1999 followed Van der Put (see following note).

4 Van der Put 1910, Appendix VI; ter Kuile 1986: 356–57; Ward 1989: 597, cat. no 4/90, Pl. 230; Ward 1999: 117. Peter II of Aragon became sole ruler after the death of his father Frederic in 1337.

5 The exhibition was accompanied by a special issue of *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 59 (2011/1) devoted to highlights of the Rijksmuseum's Islamic collection. It includes an article by De Hond and Mols on metalwork, ceramics and textiles from the Rijksmuseum collection, which were produced in the Middle East, North Africa or Spain between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries but intended for European patrons and markets in which the basin features as the starting point. It also discusses the contemporary political situation in Sicily in more detail.

6 Wiet 1932: 65–69 lists 60 Mamluk basins and bowls all manufactured during the Bahri (1250–1382) and Burji (1382–1517) periods. As not all can be traced and information about the shape and size of many is not clear, only those whose form, decoration and measurements could be documented were included in this study.

7 Rice 1956: 391, n. 2 divides the extant basins into three groups: bowl-shaped vessels with curved-in rims and rounded bottoms (group A); basins with flat bottoms and straight walls flaring out at the top (group B); basins with flat bottoms and walls which slant inwards before curving out (group C).

8 For late Ayyubid specimens made for Sultan Najm al-Din Ayyub (such as the Arenberg basin in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC, inv. no 5510), see Atıl et al. 1985: 137–43. For the Fatimid example, see Gayet 1902: 289.

9 For information on the basin made for Hughes de Lusignan, see d'Allemagne 1899; Rice 1956; Weyl Carr 2005; Ward 1989: 594–5, cat. no 4/85, Pls 234, 235.

10 Such basins decorated with well-wishes or with figurative programmes include the famous Baptistère de Saint Louis in the Louvre, or a basin in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo (hereafter MIA), inv. no 15041, which combines well-wishes with roundels with horsemen. See Table 10.1, nos 1, 6, 7, 9 and 22.

11 The perforated cover would conceal the dirty water, which was collected in the basin, from the sight of the next person washing their hands. For a nineteenth-century description of its use and a drawing of a basin with accompanying cover and ewer, see Lane 1836: 145–46.

12 O'Kane 2006b: 108–9. The basin (inv. no 24085) and ewer (inv. no 24084) are now in the MIA.

13 Carboni 1993: 455–76, cat. no 180; Contadini 1999: 4, 17 (Pl. 1), 18 (Pl. 2a) provides both a plate of the Mamluk bucket and of a comparable vessel depicted in Carpaccio's *The Dream of St Ursula*, datable to 1490–95.

14 The analysis was conducted in December 2009 by Joosje van Bennekom and Sara Creange of the Department of Restoration, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

15 For an example of extant traces of silver inlay on a Mamluk tray in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (inv. no 91.1602), see Atıl 1981b: 80. O'Kane 2006b: 145 describes a basin (MIA inv. no 15041) from which all inlay was removed, but it remains unclear if traces of silver suggest that it was formerly inlaid, or whether this is merely implied by the presence of dotted lines.

16 Bloom 1987.

17 Bloom 1987: Pls 1–1A.

18 The absence of decoration on the interior of fifteenth-century Mamluk basins is well-attested, however. See, for example, Atıl 1981b: 102–3 (no 35) and 106–7 (no 38).

19 Ward 2004: 63.

20 This aesthetic is noticeable on nos 7, 8, 11, 20, 24 and 25 in Table 10.1. It also occurs on other Mamluk metalwork objects, such as a mid-fourteenth-century steel mirror in the British Museum (OA 1960.2–15.1), see Ward 1993: 107, no 84; and on a plate in the name of Amir al-Malik dated 746/1345 (MIA inv. no 3757), see Wiet 1984: 90–94 and Pl. XLIX. An identical taste for open undecorated areas is also prominent on vessels intended for the export market, such as a bowl in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (inv. no 5621), see Ward 2007: 280, Pl. 5; on a plate with the coat of arms of the Lusignan family of Cyprus (Louvre, inv. no MAO 1227) datable between 1320 and 1350, studied by Makariou 2002: 41–44; and on a spouted bowl of cast brass with anonymous titles and a European coat of arms in the British Museum (OA 1881.8–2.22), see Ward 1993: 115, no 91.

21 For an interpretation of the flying birds as solar symbolism, see Allan 1982a: 88. For an interpretation of the fish-whorl motif both as a sun-design and as an expression of blessings for eternal life, see Baer 1968. For the interpretation of the rosette with overlapping petals as a type of early Mamluk dynastic blazon, see Meinecke 1972: 222 and Ward 2004: 65.

22 Ward 2004: 63, 65–66.

23 Ward 2004.

24 Instead, the sultan's headgear consisted of a *kalaftah*, a round turban, or the turban known as *al-na'ura* with characteristic long horns, as depicted for example on the anonymous fifteenth-century painting *Reception of the Venetian Envoys in Damascus*, now in the Louvre: see Mayer 1952: 15–17, and Pl. I.

25 The Louvre plate made for the Lusignan family on Cyprus features a comparable design of crowned rulers: see Makariou 2002: 41–44. Crowned rulers also feature on the basin in the L.A. Memorial Institute in Jerusalem (M58), see Bloom 1987: 15 and Pls Figs 3, 3A, 4, 4A; and on the Vasselot bowl in the Louvre (MAO 331), see Atıl 1981: 74–75.

26 These European-style shields on later Mamluk ware were integrated into the floral or animal designs that filled the base of candlesticks, for example. They did not serve to separate inscription bands. See Auld 2004: 249–59. For an example in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, BK-NM-11879, see de Hond and Mols 2011: 20.

27 For examples of 'empty' exteriors of basins, see nos 7, 11, 20, 24 and 25 in Table 10.1. For the spouted bowl (British Museum, OA 1881.8-2.22) with anonymous titles and a European coat of arms, see Ward 1993: 115, no 91.

28 Ter Kuile 1986: 181, 223; Theuerkauff-Liederwald 1988: 122 (nos 6, 7), 124 (no 10), 423 (no 488).

29 Kalf 1901–2: 301–2; Ward 1989: 597, cat. no 4/90.

30 Defective writing consisting of sequences of titles addressing both a sultan and an amir are much more common on surviving Mamluk wares: see Mols 2006: 102.

31 Three basins (nos 1, 6, and 7 in Table 10.1) are known to have anonymous titles. Nos 1 and 7 contain well-wishes only, while no 6, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

(inv. 740–1898), combines titles of an anonymous sultan with well-wishes. These different texts are, however, in separate bands. See Atıl 1981b: 68–71.

32 Makariou 2002: 41–44.

33 Al-Qalqashandi 1915, vol. VI: 173–83; vol. VIII: 25–54, 78–126; Lammens 1904.

34 Kalf 1901–2: 300–4.

35 Following the rephrasing of Jacobus de Voragine in his *Legenda Aurea*, a collection of the lives of saints that was popular in the fourteenth century: see de Voragine 1993, vol. I: 39.

36 Favreau 1982: 235.

37 Favreau 1982: 235, 239.

38 Favreau 1982: 237.

39 For the eruptions of Etna, see the website of the Smithsonian's Global Volcanism Program, Volcanoes of the Mediterranean and Western Asia: http://www.volcano.si.edu.

40 For a biography of Elisabeth of Carinthia, see Rugolo 1993.

41 For Mamluk metal magic bowls, see Wiet 1984: 52–59; Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997: 86–87.

42 Rice 1956: 402.

PART 4

EGYPT AND SYRIA: ARTEFACT AND TEXT

11

A BRONZE TAMBOURINE PLAYER

DORIS BEHRENS-ABOUSEIF

Fatimid art, more than any other art in the history of Islamic Egypt, has dedicated a remarkable place to female representations. Women have been represented not merely as elements in the broader context of courtly and pastime scenes, but also frequently as individual figures painted on lustre ceramics (Plate 9), carved on ivory objects or on marble *kilga*s. Fatimid images of women clearly articulate their female attributes – their physiognomy, figure and dress – making them distinct from male representations, unlike the human representations in Seljuk art, for example, where the genders are difficult, even impossible, to identify.

As elsewhere in the Islamic decorative arts, women in Fatimid art were mostly associated with representations of pastimes, being musicians, dancers or drinking companions holding a cup. As musicians, they play the lute, the flute or other string instruments. They appear dressed in different ways. On the famous ivory frame in the Islamic Museum in Berlin (Fig 11.1), female musicians wear a scarf on their head tied around their face and fastened with a band knotted on the side, and reaching down to the shoulders.[1] Women on ceramics are always depicted with their hair uncovered and adorned with a headband. Female dress, whether painted or carved, is depicted as a patterned gown with wide sleeves adorned with an upper arm band. The Egyptian marble *kilga*s known from the Fatimid and later periods display a very different kind of female representation, which still needs to be interpreted. These include nudes standing or sitting in poses that seem to be related to some kind of ritual.[2]

The Islamic Museum in Cairo owns a small figurine of cast bronze (height 5cm, width 3cm), showing a seated woman playing the tambourine (Figs 11.2, 11.3).[3] It

FIG. II.1 Four Fatimid ivory plaques forming a kind of frame. Courtesy of the Museum für Islamische Kunst Berlin (no I. 6375).

was found in Fustat and has been convincingly attributed to the Fatimid period. The musician is lavishly bejewelled, wearing a necklace, bracelets and anklets. Her hair is long, with plaited tresses falling down over her shoulders and back, recalling that of the nude female lute-player depicted in a Fatimid painting.[4] A large diadem incrusted with big stones crowns her head. The diadem is not common in Fatimid female representations: unless they wear a scarf, as in ivory carvings, women are depicted with a textile band that passes over the forehead and hangs from a knot on the side or on the back of their head; this was called *'asba* or *'isaba*.[5] This band was used as adornment, and might be embroidered or bejewelled. The fashion of the headband was attributed to the daughter of the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdi, who wore the band to conceal a scar on her forehead; it was also called *shadd al-jabin*, or forehead band.[6] As frequently shown in Arab miniatures, the band was also worn to fasten a scarf as headgear, and sometimes wrapped around the neck.[7] A figure on a lustre bowl in the Islamic Museum in Cairo wearing a three-pointed headgear, which could be either a hat or a kind of diadem, and holding a cup in each hand, is more likely to be male than female.[8]

FIG. II.2 Fatimid bronze figurine of a tambourine player, front view. Courtesy of the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo (MIA 6983).

FIG. II.3 Fatimid bronze figurine of a tambourine player, back view. Courtesy of the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo (MIA 6983).

The facial features of the Cairo tambourine player do not conform to those known from ivory carvings or lustre dishes, which generally show rather oval faces. Her face is more angular, almost triangular, which led Wiet to identify the figurine as representing a Mongol. Her eyes are particularly large and her eyebrows straight. Also unlike most women of this period, who are shown wearing gowns with large sleeves, the dress of the tambourine player is not recognisable: only her jewellery is emphasised.

All bronze figurines so far identified as Fatimid represent animals; this is the only one known to date to represent a human figure, and the fact that the figure is female only adds to the particular interest of this sculpture. The date of the figurine is unknown, and for lack of comparable material cannot be determined on stylistic grounds alone. This leaves room for speculation, which is what I will do here. I suggest that it may be associated with one of the most significant events of Fatimid history, when the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir (r.1036–94) ruled over Baghdad for almost a year (in 450–51/1058–60) and the *khutba* was spoken in his name. The figurine may have been cast during or soon after that year and, if so, its symbolic significance would be even greater than its artistic value.

The Abbasid amir Abu'l-Harith Arslan al-Basasiri, a Turkish former slave from Iran and military commander in the Buyid regime of Baghdad, played a major role in this episode. During the chaotic years towards the end of Buyid rule – with conflicts playing out between Turks, Arabs and Kurds, Sunnis and Shi'is, the Abbasid caliph, the Buyid ruling establishment and the advancing Seljuks – al-Basasiri, who had Shi'i inclinations, sought support from the Fatimid court against the Seljuk sultan Toghrul Beg. The Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah, eager to halt any Seljuk advance towards Baghdad, responded to al-Basasiri's request with generous material support. Eventually, al-Basasiri succeeded in overthrowing the Abbasid caliph al-Qa'im bi Amr Allah in 1059 and proclaimed the Fatimid Shi'i caliphate in Baghdad by pronouncing the *khutba* in the name of al-Mustansir.[9] As a token of his allegiance, al-Basasiri dispatched the royal insignia of the Abbasid caliph as a trophy to al-Mustansir in Cairo. These consisted of a turban, a gown and the iron window grille behind which the caliph sat on solemn occasions, alongside other valuables.[10] Al-Mustansir, who had been expecting to receive al-Qa'im in person and had refurbished the Western Palace to lodge him, had to content himself with the caliphal insignia. Their eventual arrival was celebrated with great pomp in both parts of the Fatimid capital, al-Qahira and Fustat, which were duly decorated for the occasion. Among the events of this celebration was the performance of a female singer and tambourine player called Nasab. She was described as a woman with masculine features (*murajjala*),[11] who used to sing at the head of processions on festive occasions, accompanied by the tambourine while at the same time conducting an orchestra. On this particular occasion, she went to al-Mustansir's palace with her tambourine to perform a song that hailed the Fatimid caliph and defamed his Abbasid adversary: 'Sons of Abbas give up! Ma'add[12] is the king! / Your rule was but a loan, and loans are to be repaid.'[13]

Her performance so delighted the Fatimid caliph that he expressed his gratitude by granting Nasab a large plot of land in the northern suburb of Cairo, located along the Khalij (canal), and including the Pond of the Brick-makers, *birkat al-tawwabin*, later known as Birkat al-Ratli. Nasab set out to develop this land, turning it into a flourishing quarter that was named after her: al-Tabbala or 'Tambourine player'.[14] Nasab's prestige was so high that she also had a mausoleum to commemorate her in the southern cemetery, *al-qarafa al-kubra*.

The singular character of this bronze figurine embodying a female musician, her unconventional physical features alongside the remarkable lavishness of her appearance, strongly suggest that this sculpture does not just represent a genre of Fatimid metalwork, but seems rather to refer to a specific tambourine player and to a person of special status. One could even detect in her traits the masculine features attributed to Nasab. To a viewer who would have seen this figurine at the time of the al-Basasiri episode, the association with Nasab may well have been evident.

The short-lived Fatimid caliphate in Baghdad ended with the execution of al-Basasiri in 1060 by the Seljuk Toghrul Beg, who eventually reinstated the Sunni Abbasid caliphate. However, the Fatimid triumph in Baghdad remained a remarkable episode in the history of both caliphates, which Maqrizi described as the last happy moment in the history of the Fatimids (*Akhir sa'adat al-dawlat al-fatimiyya*).[15] In the following century the Fatimids also lost all their territories outside Egypt to the Seljuks, who were later supplanted by the Crusaders.

Besides the bronze figurine, Cairo may still preserve another memento of the Baghdad episode: the window grille from the Abbasid palace. This was initially installed in the Dar al-Wizara, the residence of the Fatimid viziers in al-Qahira, located on the western side of the caliphal palace in what later became Jamaliyya. After this palace was demolished in the early Mamluk period to make room for the *khanqah* of the sultan al-Muzaffar Baybars (completed 1308), the grille was incorporated into the sultan's mausoleum which was attached to the *khanqah*.[16] Today a window with a grille, larger than all others, can still be seen on the mausoleum's façade.[17] Only scientific analysis can verify whether the material composition of this grille is distinct from the others and thus confirm whether or not it could be the trophy sent by al-Basasiri from Baghdad.

The Tabbala quarter survived for centuries. After a setback due to the plague during Sultan al-'Adil Katbugha's reign in 694–96/1294–96, it recovered in the 1320s under the patronage of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad's chamberlain Baktimur al-Hajib, who owned the land by that time. When the sultan began digging the Nasiri Canal to conduct water from the Nile to his foundation in the village of Siryaqus, located to the northeast of Cairo, Baktimur asked him to connect the Ratli pond with the new canal. Baktimur eventually built a dam at the junction of the canal with the pond and a bridge over the canal to boost the development of this area. Until the Azbakiyya pond was dug in the late fifteenth century, the Birkat al-Ratli area was the major venue of pleasance and excursion in medieval Cairo. In his description of the venue, Maqrizi cites the following anonymous poem in its praise: 'In the land of our Tabbala is a pond wondrous to the eye and mind / In the balance of my mind it outweighs by the *ratl* all the seas of the world.'[18]

NOTES

1 Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. no 16375; see *Trésors*: 138; Bloom 2007: 108.

2 Ali Ibrahim 1978: 2.

3 Inv. no MIA 6983. See Wiet 1930: no 40; *Islamic Art in Egypt*: no 46; *The Arts of Islam*: no 170; O'Kane 2006b: 79.

4 Rice 1958: 31–39; Bloom 2007: 113, Fig. 82.

5 Ballian 2006: 67, no 52; *Trésors*: no 35; Seipel 1998: no 52.

6 Dozy 1854: 300ff; Ibrahim 2007: 251ff; Stillmann 2003: 80ff; Ibn Taghribirdi 1963–71, vol. II: 191.

7 This type of headgear is also worn by women depicted in the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo: see Grube and Johns 2005: 46–91.

8 *The Arts of Islam*: no 276. The headgear is comparable to that of a youth in a Syrian lustre bowl: see von Folsach 2001: no 135.

9 Canard, 'al-Basasiri' (EI²); al-Maqrizi 1967–73, vol. II: 232–35, 252–58; Ibn al-Athir 1301/1883–84, vol. IX: 208–28.

10 Later on, when Salah al-Din overthrew the Fatimids, he sent back to Baghdad the Abbasid insignia alongside al-Qa'im's abdication letter in favour of the Fatimid caliph.

11 Al-Maqrizi 1888–89, vol. II: 125.

12 Ma'add was al-Mustansir's personal name.

13 Al-Maqrizi 1888–89, vol. I: 438; vol. II: 125, 416, 439, 448; al-Maqrizi 1967–73, vol. II: 254. In the *Khitat*, al-Maqrizi writes that she stood in front of the palace, while in the *Itti'az* he writes that she was inside the palace.

14 Al-Maqrizi 1888–89, vol. II: 151, 162, 165ff, 315, 326ff. Although the term *tabl* means drum rather than tambourine, Ibn Taghribirdi's text explicitly reports that she played the tambourine (*duff*), though this is not mentioned in al-Maqrizi's text: see Ibn Taghribirdi 1963–71, vol. V: 11ff. The term *tabbala* refers to the act of beating any percussion instrument.

15 Al-Maqrizi 1967–73, vol. II: 257.

16 Al-Maqrizi 1888–89, vol. II: 416.

17 For an image, see Creswell 1978: Pl. 96; Behrens-Abouseif 2007: 164.

18 Al-Maqrizi 1888–89, vol. II: 162. *Ratl* is a weight measure that was used in Egypt until recently.

12

THE FATIMID BRONZE HOARD OF TIBERIAS

ELIAS KHAMIS

During the course of rescue excavations in Tiberias in the summer of 1998 at a site at the foot of Mount Berniki at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, a Fatimid bronze hoard was retrieved 200m from the ancient bathhouse of Tiberias.[1] The hoard was found in situ, tightly packed into three *pithoi* (the largest measuring about 75cm in diameter and 90cm in height), in a structure containing two small rooms and an open courtyard that had been used as a coppersmith's workshop or part of one (Fig. 12.1). Two of the *pithoi* were found buried beneath the floor level, while the third was found above the floor level, in the corner of the back room. The workshop, which appears to have been active for a long period, was part of a residential complex, built during the Abbasid and Fatimid periods, that included a 20m-long street or alley, flanked on both sides by domestic structures, each composed of a central, open courtyard with various installations and surrounded by smaller rooms; the workshop is located in the southern residence, at the eastern end of the street.[2]

The hoard consists of about a thousand vessels and other objects, the majority being bronze but also including some iron artefacts, one ceramic jar and one glass bottle. The importance of the hoard lies in the fact that it can be dated precisely: Byzantine 'anonymous folis' coins, bearing the image of Christ, were found among the vessels, indicating that the hoard was buried no earlier than 1078. This accords with the independent dating of most of the vessels, on the basis of shape, decoration and inscriptions, to the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Early Islamic bronze vessels, especially Fatimid examples, are rare, and as only a few have been discovered during systematic excavations or in hoards, precise dating is

FIG. 12.1 The Fatimid coppersmith's workshop in the excavated site in Tiberias, looking west. Photograph Elias Khamis.

difficult. One of the most important hoards was found recently during archaeological excavations at Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast,[3] which also contains vessels most similar in style and decoration to those uncovered at Tiberias. Other similar hoards have been found in Denia, on the eastern coast of Spain (unpublished); at Serçe Limani, on southern coast of Turkey;[4] and in northern Syria, at 'Ayn Dara, near Aleppo.[5] The discovery of a hoard in what appears to have been an active coppersmith's workshop at Tiberias therefore not only constitutes a rare opportunity to examine typical shapes and decoration of Fatimid metalwork, as well as production techniques, but also allows new vessel types and decorative elements to be dated and defined.

THE OBJECTS

The majority of the items can be defined as domestic and divided into three main groups. The first group is that of lighting devices, including lampstands and candlesticks, several fragments of perforated lacework mosque lamps, oil lamps and lamp-fillers. The second group, tableware, comprises a large variety of vessels, the most prominent of which are ewers, jugs, bottles, bowls, trays and round boxes. Vessels classed as kitchen-

ware comprise the third group, mainly buckets, a cooking pot, a frying pan, pestles and mortars. A smaller, fourth group is that of furniture, caskets and vessel-fittings; a variety of miscellaneous items that fit into none of these groups was also found, such as sword quillons, a pair of stirrups and various tools. Besides the bronze artefacts, the hoard includes several iron items, including stirrups, hooks, nails, bucket handles and scissors.

LIGHTING DEVICES (FIG. 12.2)

Lampstands

One hundred and forty-two complete and fragmentary lampstands of various shapes and sizes were uncovered. These were made of three parts: a high domed tripod base, a cylindrical shaft with baluster-shaped links, and a large disc on top. On this, oil lamps were placed, as illustrated in the late-twelfth-century manuscripts of the *Kitab al-Diryaq* (*Book of Antidotes*) and the early-thirteenth-century copy of the *Materia Medica* of Dioscorides.[6] This type of lampstand continues a tradition that originated in the Roman and Byzantine periods. The new forms represented in the hoard probably evolved in Egypt during the ninth and tenth centuries and became typical in the Fatimid period.

FIG. 12.2 A group of various lighting devices. Photograph Elias Khamis.

Candlesticks

Six candlesticks were retrieved. Each consists of a hemispherical bowl, in the centre of which is a small, thick-rimmed receptacle for the wax candle. Judging from the lead-tin soldering traces on the underside of the candlesticks, it would seem that they originally stood on three small legs shaped like animal feet, similar to others found loose in the hoard. The only parallel for these candlesticks was found in the Fatimid bronze hoard from Caesarea. Elaborate candlesticks were common from the Ayyubid period onward, reaching their most developed form during the Mamluk period. The candlesticks from Tiberias represent the earliest form of this type.

Perforated lamps

Six fragments of beautiful perforated lacework mosque lamps were found in the hoard. A smaller glass lamp filled with oil would have been placed inside the metal lamp, which was then suspended from the ceiling on chains or decorated straps, the light being emitted through the openwork design. Vase-shaped mosque lamps in metal such as this are known from the ninth to thirteenth centuries, usually decorated with religious formulae in Arabic script. The absence of religious texts on the Tiberias lamps might suggest that the lamps were for use in secular or non-Muslim religious buildings. In light of the Tiberias examples, it seems logical to divide the group of perforated vase-shaped mosque lamps into two types on the basis of technique, design and chronology. The early type, including the Tiberias pieces, is usually raised out of a very thin sheet of metal that was intensively perforated in a lacework manner to create geometric, stylised floral or interlacing designs that cover the whole surface. This type should be dated to the ninth to eleventh centuries.[7] The later type is decorated with *repoussé* designs and perforated in a manner following the gaps between the decorative motifs. This later type should be dated to the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, according to the dates that appear on some of them, the use of cursive script, and the elaborate inlaid patterns with which they are decorated.[8] Both types of mosque lamp probably originated in the eastern Mediterranean region during the Fatimid to early Mamluk periods, from where they were exported to the eastern parts of the Muslim world, Iran and Central Asia.

Oil lamps and lamp-fillers

Nine bronze oil lamps, complete and fragmentary, were found in the hoard, the main bodies of which are roughly round or rectangular. The rectangular oil lamps are basically flat at the front and rounded at the back with concave or straight sides. They have flat bases with four short feet, and one or two beak-like nozzles. Two of the rectangular lamps have flat lids composed of two small plaques joined by a hinge, allowing the lid to be opened for refilling. The third has a small hinged lid to cover the filling-hole in the middle. Bronze oil lamps of this type are relatively rare and have parallels chiefly from early Islamic Egypt and Syria.[9] None of the round lamps was preserved intact, their containers and lids being found separately. The round bronze lamps are probably imitating one of the well-known types of round pottery oil lamps produced in Egypt and Syria from the tenth to thirteenth centuries. The round oil lamps also share similar features, such as the nozzle and the lid.

Thirteen lamp-fillers were found in the hoard, in the form of small bowls with a long, narrow open spout and a large, stylised, leaf-shaped handle. The bowls had flaring flattened rims and a flat disc base. These vessels were common in Egypt, Syria, Turkey and Iran from the early Islamic period onwards.[10]

Incense-burner

An elaborate openworked incense-burner was recovered, composed of a cylindrical body (to which a long handle was once attached) and a domed lid, joined by a hinge (Fig. 12.3). The body is decorated by acanthus scrolls with a rosette in the centre of each. The lid is decorated with a design depicting vine-leaf scrolls populated with animals such as hares and foxes. It stands on three legs, each modelled in the shape of a female face with a bird's foot and a pair of stylised wings. This is a well-known type of incense-burner that has many parallels related to the Copts in Egypt and dated to the eighth to tenth centuries.[11]

FIG. 12.3 An incense-burner (height 22cm). Photograph Elias Khamis.

TABLEWARE

Ewers (Fig. 12.4)

There were 22 ewers and 29 ewer handles in the hoard, most of them rare types. At least two ewers were cast, but all others were made from beaten sheet metal. The most common type of ewer in the hoard is represented by six examples, each large and plain with a globular body, flat base, long and wide flaring neck, spout or pouring pipe opposite a hollow handle. This is a rare type, and the only related cast examples are two small bronze ewers, in the Keir and Bumiller Collections.[12] However, two silver ewers raised from sheet metal and decorated with *repoussé* provide closer parallels; both are in the Hermitage and datable to the ninth to eleventh centuries.[13] A second type of ewer has a globular body decorated with medallions (in two of which Kufic inscriptions were engraved), a cylindrical, flaring neck decorated with a honeycomb pattern and with an openwork cup inserted into the neck to serve as a strainer (similar to the well-known Fatimid pottery water filters), a long, straight spout and a hollow handle. This type of spout is known from a few early Islamic ewer types, in particular two types found in Egypt which can be related to the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan II (r.744–50).[14] Another similar ewer but with S-shaped spout and datable to the ninth

to tenth centuries is in the Vatican.[15] The classical shape of the globular body, the filter and the spout could relate this ewer to types produced in Egypt or Syria. A group of 14 large, hollow and S-shaped handles belonging to these two types of ewer were also found in the hoard.

The first of the two cast ewers is a well-known, frequently encountered type, examples of which have been found in Iran, datable to the tenth to thirteenth centuries. Ewers of this type have a globular body, cylindrical flaring neck and flat disc base, but their most prominent feature is a beaded handle with a pomegranate on its top.[16] Ewers of this type were probably first produced in Iraq during the Abbasid period, and from there spread towards the eastern provinces of the Islamic world.[17] The second cast ewer is a type characterised by an ovoid or pear-shaped body decorated with sinuous flutes, a short neck which in the centre has a ring collar decorated with diagonal ribs and an almond-shaped rim. The ewer's S-shaped handle, with a bird on top and a snake's head along its edge, is sharply angled at its lower end and at its centre is a pierced rectangular block. This type of ewer belongs to a small group that have been variously attributed to pre-Islamic or early Islamic Egypt.[18]

FIG. 12.4 A group of ewers and bottles. Photograph Elias Khamis.

Bottles

About twenty bottles and bottle fragments were recovered, all of the same type, featuring a bell-shaped body, a flat base and a trumpet-shaped neck with a ridge around its centre or where it joined the body. Most of the bottles are plain, but some have a band of Arabic script encircling the shoulder. Bottles of this type are known from Syria and Egypt in the tenth to twelfth centuries.[19]

Bowls (Fig. 12.5)

Some fifty bowls of three main types were found. The first type comprises two identical large, deep bowls with concave walls and a flat base. A band of Kufic script runs around the interior below the rim. These bowls are mainly known from Egypt,[20] and were probably used as basins to catch the water poured out from a large ewer while washing the hands. If this is the case, then we might assume that they were the predecessors of the later Ayyubid and Mamluk basins such as the well-known Baptistère de Saint Louis, now in the Louvre.[21] The second type includes hemispherical bowls of various sizes, mostly plain, but some decorated with punched circles with central dots, or

FIG. 12.5 A group of various bowls, jugs, buckets, bottles, mortar and pestle, and incense-burner. Photograph Elias Khamis.

with engraved floral designs. The upper half of one of these bowls is decorated with overlapping bands of Kufic inscription, creating an arcade of horseshoe-shaped arches, each arch surrounding a two-petalled palmette motif. Immediately below this is another band of arcading, but this time a bird is placed within each arch. A ring-punched ground surrounds this pattern of arcades and script.

The third type consists of shallow bowls of various sizes, with low, straight or rounded walls, a wide, thick rim and a flat base. Three lead-tin soldering marks are discernible on the base of each of these bowls, indicating that they originally sat on three small, probably spherical feet.[22] Most of the bowls are plain, but some are decorated. On one bowl there is an inscription on the wide, flat rim and a depiction of a bird on the interior base, while the interior base of another bowl has a circular medallion containing a central wheel-shaped stylised floral design. Bowls of this type have been termed incense plates in the secondary literature.[23]

A single example of a beaker or goblet with flaring sides, an out-folded rim and a raised and inverted ring base was also found. The main element of the exterior decoration is a frieze of a scrolling, stylised acanthus vine on a punched ground. Hanging from the frieze are similar floral decorations, set in three groups, around almond-shaped pendants alternating upwards and downwards. Similar bronze beakers are known mainly from pre- and early Islamic Egypt.[24]

Trays

Among the vessels found are four shallow plates of various sizes that can be classified as trays. They are characterised by a low, upright wall, a flat base, and an average of seven lead-tin soldering marks on the wall, indicating where legs were attached. These legs elevated the tray and protruded both above and below it.[25] Three of the trays are richly decorated. The central decoration of the largest tray is composed of a bell-shaped cartouche surrounding a seated figure (Fig. 12.6). On either side of the cartouche is a large plant form, pointing inwards. The seated figure, with crossed legs, wears a pointed cap and a robe decorated with clusters of four tiny dots. He appears to hold a goblet or cup in his right hand and a leaf in the left hand. An arabesque pattern fills the ground surrounding the main elements of the design. Encircling the tray is a band of Kufic script containing a benedictory inscription. On a second tray a band of Kufic script with blessings to the tray's owner encircles a six-pointed star that is interlaced with a six-lobed rosette; the surrounding ground consists of a densely incised floral pattern. The decoration of the third tray consists of a circular medallion surrounding a bird on a ring-punched ground. Around the central medallion is a band of heart-shaped elements, each enclosing a trifoliate leaf or palmette.

FIG. 12.6 Large tray decorated with a seated human figure (diameter 34cm, height 3.3cm). Drawing Elias Khamis.

Boxes

Some 31 items of the hoard belong to a rare type of round box. Only four intact boxes of various sizes were found, the remainder of the items consisting of eight box lids, nine containers, hasps, hinges and handles. Boxes of this type are round and flat with vertical walls and composed of two parts, container and lid. The lid is made of thin sheet metal with low margins and a small circular handle on top. The container has straight, relatively thick walls, with an indentation on the upper side of the exterior that served to hold the lid. The base is flat in most cases, and always has traces of three lead-tin solders that indicate the position of three lost legs; the legs are vase-shaped, similar to some of those found loose in the hoard. The two parts of the box are joined by hinges and fastened with clasps into pins protruding from the wall of the container of the box. The upper sides of the lids are decorated with a variety of motifs: geometric, floral and arabesque. X-ray photographs revealed several small bowls arranged inside two of the boxes which were fused shut. A few boxes of this identical type were found among the items of the Caesarea bronze hoard.[26] Another, of Egyptian origin and datable to the eleventh century, is now in the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin;[27] based on shape, material and decoration, it seems to belong to the same workshop or school that produced the Tiberias and Caesarea boxes. Another similar box, with a convex lid and a different system of

hinges, now in Barletta Cathedral (Bari), has been attributed to Egypt.[28] The lid is decorated with two circular bands of script, Kufic on the lid interior and cursive on the exterior of the lid, the presence of cursive dating the box to no earlier than the twelfth century. The decoration of this type of round box became more elaborate in the thirteenth century, with a dome-shaped element placed in the centre of the lid.[29] While James Allan has suggested that some of the Mamluk boxes were used for storing incense or spices, the main function of the Fatimid round boxes remains obscure. These boxes were produced in Syria and Egypt and used during the Fatimid and Mamluk periods only.

KITCHENWARE

Buckets

Nine buckets and 21 bucket handles were found. In addition to these, a large number of bucket lugs (triangular in shape with round holes), which were used to hold the arched handles, were found dispersed among the metal scrap. The nine buckets represent two main types: the first has straight walls with a flat or low ring base; the second has rounded walls and a rounded base. Both types have lugs projecting vertically from the rim and to which an arched handle is usually attached. The first type, which comprises both big and small buckets which are usually cast, has straight walls, a thickened straight or everted rim, and a flat or ring base. The small buckets with flat bases have traces of lead-tin solder at three points on the lower part of the wall and at adjacent points on the base, indicating that three side-legs, with vertical recesses and a small globular base of a type found in the hoard, were attached to them. Most have a Kufic inscription running around the exterior just beneath the rim, with other schematic floral designs below. The arched handles are usually flat and wide, each end terminating in a round hole that is connected to the holes of the lugs by swivel pins. Most scholars concur that this type of bucket is Fatimid in date, but their function is still obscure.[30]

The second bucket type is made of beaten sheet metal and usually undecorated, with a piriform body and rounded bottom. The handles are usually square or round in section, with a loop at each end that hooks into the holes of the lugs. This type of bucket is rare and most probably was a local production catering for local needs. This type of bucket might have been used for washing in the famous hot baths of Tiberias, only a few hundred metres from the coppersmith's workshop: an illustration in a copy of the *Khamsa* of Nizami shows how such buckets were used in bathhouses.[31] If this assumption is right, it is possible to explain why so many lugs were found in the hoard: the lugs were probably the weakest part of the bucket and thus tended to break quickly.

The damaged buckets were most probably sent to the workshop to be repaired. The processes of repairing them demanded cutting the damaged lugs and replacing them with new ones.

Dippers

Included in the hoard were two large and one small dipper and three dipper handles, all of which are cast. The large dippers have vertical and slightly slanting walls, inverted and thickened rims, and carinated at the lower part of the walls. The base is flat. Attached to the thickened rim is a long, tapering strip handle, with a trefoil or rounded in shape at its end. A band of Kufic inscription runs around the exterior below the rim, and beneath this is a band of incised, floral decoration. The small dipper has a straight wall that is curved at the bottom, a thickened and flat rim and a small flat base; the handle is broken. It is decorated with two bands of decoration, one filled with a schematic, floral scroll, the other with a geometric pattern. The dippers are very similar in their shape and decoration to the cast buckets from the hoard. The similarity in the shapes and the small details could indicate they were produced in the same workshop.

Pestles and mortars

Two intact mortars and fragments of a third, together with two intact pestles and fragments of four others, were found in the hoard. The mortars are cylindrical, with thick straight walls and thick, flat bases. The rims are wide and flat, slanting slightly towards the interior of the mortar. Protruding from the walls of each are three long, triangular bosses, alternating with three shorter ones. The pestles have cylindrical shafts, sometimes with a thick ridge in the centre, widening at the bottom, to create a thickened surface suitable for grinding.[32] The Tiberias mortars appear to be the earliest metal mortars known. This type was spread throughout the Mediterranean countries during the tenth and eleventh centuries and was the dominant type in Europe for centuries.[33]

FURNITURE, CASKETS AND VESSEL FITTINGS

Many objects found in the hoard may be defined as fittings for furniture. The biggest and the most dominant of these is a group of five identical bronze legs, about 54cm in length, the size of which suggests that they were attached to a large piece of furniture,

such as a bed or table. Four other similar legs, though much smaller in size, were also found, as were four large round objects with a hollow triangular section and three palmette-shaped projections bulging from their perimeters. At the bottom of each projection are round traces of lead-tin solder that indicate that the item was soldered on three spots, i.e. that the item served as a tripod. Handles decorated in a variety of styles were found together with bronze hinges and strips decorated with engraved floral designs or Kufic script and plated with gold leaf which apparently adorned elaborate wooden or ivory chests of a type well known from the tenth to twelfth centuries.[34] Padlock plates were found, decorated with rosettes, with holes for handle and key. Also found was an iron key and a small bronze lock with the double head of the god Janus, made in the shape of a box opened by a hinge. This lock probably dates from the late Roman period, making it one of the earliest objects found in the hoard.[35]

Hundreds of handles and legs were found scattered among the vessels, some belonging to vessels in the hoard, others to vessels not found. The largest group of handles consists of solid, horizontal, cast handles of various sizes; they are arched, usually with a round section but sometimes with a polygonal section, and leaf-shaped bases. Most have a raised ring in the centre. In addition, small decorative figurines usually attached to bronze vessels were found, such as a bird of prey attacking a gazelle.[36] Another statuette probably represents an ostrich,[37] and a smaller one probably depicts a peacock.

MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS

The most impressive iron object in the hoard is a pair of well-preserved, elaborate stirrups decorated with partially preserved gold threads. The closest parallels to these stirrups were found in the ninth-century Avar tombs in Croatia.[38] Also included in the hoard were three sword quillons of a rare type dating from the early Islamic period, and a dapping-block, with different-sized hemispherical depressions, that was used to make the beads typical of Fatimid jewellery.[39] Only a few pieces of jewellery were found, the best-preserved being a plain silver-gilt armlet, also typical of Fatimid jewellery.[40] Other pieces of jewellery are simple types of bronze bracelets and rings.

DECORATION

The decoration is well defined and limited to specific areas of a vessel: arranged in bands surrounding the walls of the vessel or, in some cases, enclosed within medallions in the interior base of the vessel. Typical designs include stylised floral or simple geometric

motifs and birds, as well as small bird and animal figures used as the handles and feet of vessels. The most prominent decorative feature is the use of the Kufic script.

Dozens of Arabic inscriptions appear on the vessels from the Tiberias hoard, written in the form of Kufic script typical on metalwork of the tenth and eleventh centuries. The inscriptions are usually arranged in bands around the vessel wall or in circular and horizontal bands of script on a flat surface, and constitute the chief decoration of some of the vessels. The inscriptions emphasise the form of the vessel and are always located on its most prominent point, such as the shoulder of a bottle, beneath the rim of a bowl on the interior or exterior, on the lid of a box or around the base of a serving-dish. Inscriptions were engraved in a single horizontal line on spoon handles or on strips of bronze adorning wooden caskets. As a rule, beneath a band of script engraved around a vessel, a simple design was added to serve as the inscription's lower border. When the inscription occurred as a circular band on the lid of a box or the base of a tray, it usually surrounds a geometric or floral background design; in one case there is another smaller concentric band of script within.

Most of the inscriptions are benedictory, blessings and wishes for happiness, prosperity, good health and long life. The wishes were directed at the owner of the vessel, who was always anonymous. Formulae consisting of blessings from Allah to the vessels' owners, well known to us from earlier periods of Islam, also appear on several vessels from the hoard. The name of Allah appears six times on one vessel. No example of a vessel bearing the name of its owner has been found so far in the Tiberias hoard, though one lampstand tripod bears the name of its manufacturer, 'Abbas, on its base.

SUMMARY

It is a very rare opportunity to find such a large quantity of bronze vessels and other objects in a well-dated coppersmith's workshop that was still active to the last moments before it was abandoned, probably at the eve of the Crusader invasion. Evidence of this activity is provided by a bronze barrel weight of a type well known from the Fatimid period, together with a flat lead block, probably used as an anvil, bronze scraps and shavings 5cm thick found on the floor level of the workshop. The common features shared by the many types of objects, as well as their decoration and inscriptions, indicate that they were produced in the same workshop or local school. The various tools and objects that were used by the coppersmiths of Tiberias provide the hard evidence for the place of production of the majority of vessels found there. Probably other vessels were produced in Egypt or in other Syrian sites. The Egyptian metalwork industry of the Fatimid period is known to us from historical sources as well as from the various

metal vessels and items that were found in or attributed to Egypt. On the other hand, the Syrian metalwork industry is known to us mainly from historical sources alone. The contents of the Syrian metalwork workshop revealed in Tiberias, one of the major cities between Cairo and Damascus during the Fatimid period, supplies the first evidence for the existence of this industry. It therefore seems that the well-known Syrian metalwork industry of the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, producing the highest-quality Islamic metalwork, continued a long tradition since classical times. The hoard from Tiberias is an important missing link in the chain of the development of the metalwork industry between the early and medieval Islamic periods. The shape and function of many of the vessels found in the Tiberias hoard, such as the spouted ewer, concave bowls, round boxes and candlesticks, are probably the antecedents of the vessel shapes which developed during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods.

NOTES

1 The excavation was conducted by the late Professor Yizhar Hirschfeld and Dr Oren Gutfeld of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who kindly gave me permission to study these finds; to them and to Dr Roni Amir, who helped me to catalogue the hoard's items, I owe my sincere gratitude. Special thanks are due to Prof. Rachel Millstein and Prof. James Allan for their guidance and advice throughout my work. Photographs are by Gabi Laron and the author; drawings are by Tania Gornstein. Most of the cleaning, conservation and treatment of the vessels was conducted in the laboratories of the Institute of Archaeology by Miriam Lavi, assisted by Ravit Linn. A few vessels were cleaned by Orna Cohen, and others were cleaned in the laboratories of the Israel Museum. A preliminary report of the hoard has been published in Hebrew (Khamis and Amir 1999).

2 Hirschfeld and Gutfeld 2008.

3 Lester et al. 1999: 36–41; Ziffer 1996: Fig. 92. See also the article by Lester in this volume (Chapter 13).

4 In a shipwreck dated to the eleventh century, see Allan 2004: 345–60.

5 Al-Sayrafi 1960: 87–102.

6 Baer 1983: Figs 1–2.

7 Pope 1939: 2486, Pl. 1276A; Rice 1955: Fig. 8, Pls VIII–XIV; Ward 1993: n. 2; Behrens-Abouseif 1995: 25–26, Pls 11–13.

8 Allan 2002: n. 20; Rice 1955: Fig. 11, Pls I–VII; Behrens-Abouseif 1995: Pl. 14; Ettinghausen et al. 2001: n. 404.

9 For the Egyptian context, see Benazeth 2001: nos 166–72; for the Syrian, see Ziffer 1996: Fig. 13, n. 13–14.

10 Fehérvári 1976: n. 18; Allan 1982b: nos 79–82; Ziffer 1996: Figs 43–44; Melikian-Chirvani 1982: nos 13–15; Von Gladiss and Kröger 1985: 1.

11 Bénazeth 1988: 299.
12 Fehérvári 1976: n. 8; Bumiller 2002: n. BC–2.399.
13 Ettinghausen et al. 2001: nos 197–98; Marschak 1986: nos 127–28.
14 Sarre 1934: Figs 1–4; Ward 1993: Fig. 48.
15 Gabrieli and Scerrato 1979: n. 496.
16 Fehérvári 1976: n. 5; Allan 1982b: 82, n. 100; Melikian-Chirvani 1982: 85, n. 19.
17 Allan 1982b: 42–43.
18 Fehérvári 1976: n. 21; Baer 1983: n. 64; Fehérvári 1988: M3–M4; Ward 1993: n. 47.
19 Fehérvári 1976: n. 22; Ziffer 1996: Fig. 92.
20 Baer 1983: nos 87–88; Allan 1985a: Figs 1–2.
21 Rice 1953d. See also the essay by Mols in this volume (Chapter 10).
22 Melikian-Chirvani 1982: 61, Fig. 24.
23 Melikian-Chirvani 1982: nos 21–23, 36–38; Von Gladiss and Kröger 1985: 131.
24 Allan 1976: Pl. 7; Bénazeth 2001: n. 329.
25 Lester et al. 1999: Fig. 4b–c; Melikian-Chirvani 1974a: Figs 28–29.
26 See Lester's essay in this volume (Chapter 13).
27 Seipel 1999: n. 71; Von Gladiss and Kröger 1985: 29.
28 Gabrieli and Scerrato 1979: nos 343–44.
29 Allan 1982a: n. 14.
30 Allan 2004: 348–50, Figs 20–22: MV7-MV8; Figs 20–24: MV6-MV8; Contadini 1998: 113–14, Pls 53–54; Von Gladiss and Kröger 1985: 27; Allan 1976b: Pl. 6; Ettinghausen 1943: Figs 5–6.
31 Gray 1961: 117.
32 Ziffer 1996: Fig. 79; al-Sayrafi 1960: Fig. 17.
33 Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997: 290–300, type 1; Allan 1986e: 19; Gabrieli and Scerrato 1979: nos 204–5; Gómez-Moreno 1951: Fig. 394.
34 Kühnel 1971b.
35 Menzel 1964: nos 150–51.
36 Seipel 1999: n. 62; Fehérvári 1976: n. 36.
37 Seipel 1999: n. 64.
38 Bertelli et al. 2001: n. III.1–2.
39 Allan and Gilmour 2000: Fig. 54.
40 Hasson 1987: 67–72.

13

A GROUP OF ROUND BOXES FROM THE METAL HOARD FOUND IN CAESAREA

AYALA LESTER

THE BACKGROUND TO THE HOARD

Archaeological excavations were conducted in Caesarea over an extensive period during the second half of the twentieth century. In 1995, during excavations carried out by the Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima – headed by Professors Avner Raban, Joseph Patrich and Kenneth Holum – a large hoard of over two hundred bronze, pottery and glass vessels was uncovered on the Temple Platform in a small cavity (1.5m by 1m by 1.5m high). The space was filled with vessels that had been placed one on top of the other. Most of the items were made of brass and included lampstands, trays, ewers and buckets, together with glazed pottery and glass vessels.[1] The metal vessels from this hoard are the subject of my doctoral thesis.[2] The discussion in this article, dealing with these four boxes, is based upon a chapter in the thesis.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BOXES AND THEIR USE

This group includes two wide, flat boxes, a lid of a box, and the body of another box. Box nos 1 and 2 are low and round with flat bases and decorated lids (Figs 13.1–13.4). The centre of each lid is perforated for the insertion of a handle. Box no 3 has a trifoliate handle in the centre (Fig. 13.5). The lids of box nos 1 and 2 were attached to the main part of the box by a pair of hinges, securing the receptacle to the lid, and

a clasp which locked the box. The clasps and hinges were cast and connected to the lid with small nails.

Box no 1 is made of thick hammered sheet, decorated with stylised palmette-shaped hinges. The lid and base were worked on a lathe and decorated with pairs of circles. Box no 2 is made of thin hammered sheet, and the lid is decorated with an engraved twisted interlace pattern, ending in half palmettes, and with a band bearing an inscription, near its rim. Guilloche patterns decorate the side, and a band composed of a twisted tendril decorates the centre of the base. The lid of box no 3 and the body of box no 4 are made of a thin sheet of brass. Box no 4 has a flat base and straight walls with the remains of a flat short rim. Box nos 3 and 4 are decorated with pairs of circles created on the lathe. In her study of *Metalwork in Medieval Islamic Art*, Eva Baer discussed cylindrical boxes datable to the thirteenth century, including a box with a cylindrical body and a lid with a slanted upper section.[3] A box similar to box nos 1 and 2, is on display at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin: it rests on three small feet which were soldered to the base.[4]

The most significant find of boxes of this type is the group of 31 boxes which were part of the workshop unearthed in Tiberias. This cache included four complete boxes, eight lids and nine box receptacles, as well as hinges and handles.[5] The boxes are round, with flat receptacles and round lids joined by hinges, with varying dimensions and ornamentation. A round box lid, discovered at excavations in Tiberias carried out by

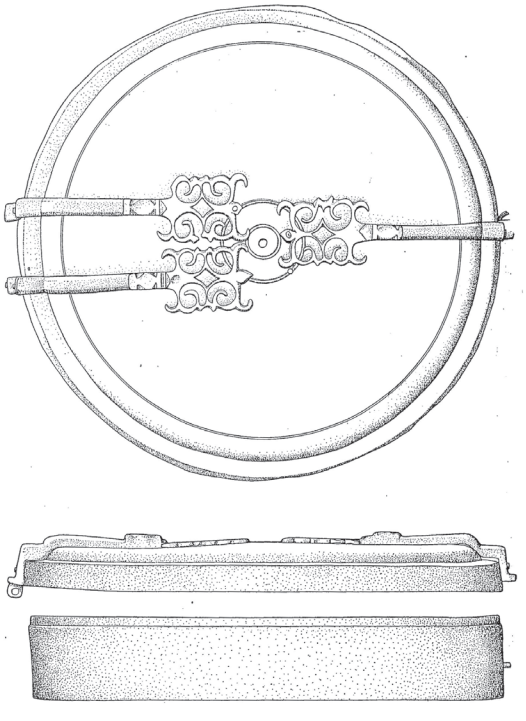

FIG. 13.1 Box no 1: general view. Israel Antiquities Authority No 95-3496. Drawing Ayala Lester.

Hirschfeld – and which in an earlier publication I proposed to be part of a jewellery box[6] – is, in fact, the lid of a flat box similar to box no 2. A decorated hinge, similar to the hinges of box no 1, was also part of this small cache.[7]

Shallow, round boxes datable to the fourteenth century were found at the excavations in Hama.[8] Over the years, various findings have been discovered at excavations in Israel, such as fragments of hinges and clasps which can now be identified as parts of round boxes of this type, as well as rectangular boxes or chests. In the 1978 Tiberias excavation, various fragments of round, thin plaques were discovered, which can now be clearly identified as being parts of round boxes. During a rescue excavation in Ramla in 1970, a hinge of a metal box was discovered. A hinge with two arms from a small, rectangular box was also discovered at another rescue excavation that took place in Ramla in 2004. Various parts of boxes were unearthed during the 1994 Caesarea excavations: a clasp with an interlace palmette design, a fragment of a decorated hinge similar to that of box no 1, two intertwined hinges, and a box hinge with a pointed end.[9]

Khamis devotes an extensive discussion to this group of boxes, and he suggested that they served as boxes for spices, dried fruits etc., similar to the earthenware dishes with multiple depressions, known as sweet-meat dishes, which were common in the Islamic world from the ninth to eleventh centuries.[10] Rosen-Ayalon notes that this type of earthenware dish originated in the East and is recorded from the second century

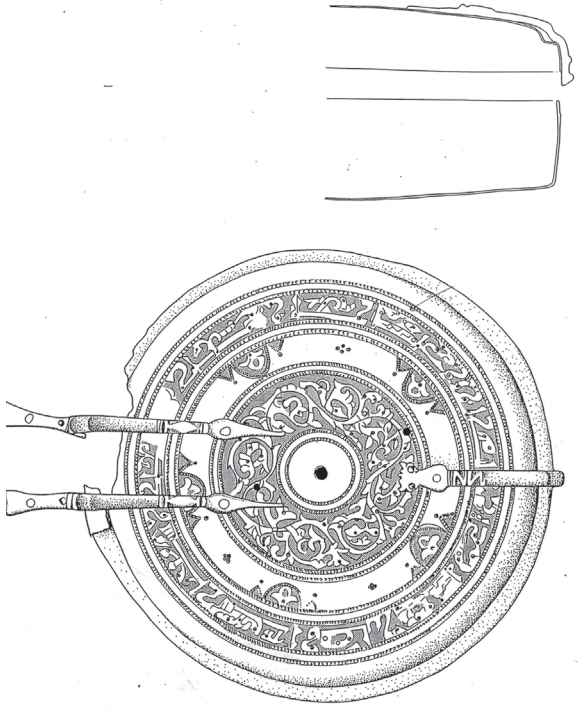

FIG. 13.2 Box no 2: Cover and view in section. IAA no 95-3495. Drawing Ayala Lester.

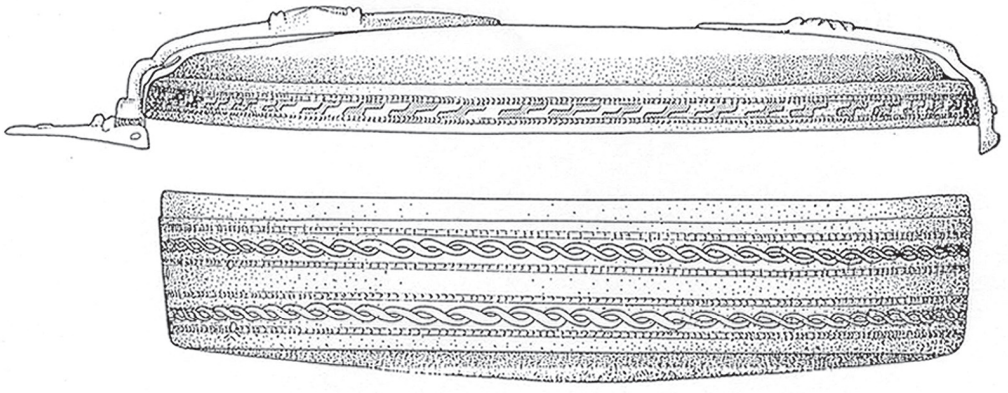

FIG. 13.3 Box no 2: view from the side. Drawing Ayala Lester.

BC onwards.[11] It reached the Islamic world from Sasanian and Coptic prototypes, and continued to be used from Egypt to Iran up to the Ottoman period.[12] Rosen-Ayalon mentions a part of a sweet-meat dish comprised of small bowls, which was discovered at the Ramla excavations in 1965.[13] Fragments of this type of dish were found at other excavations in Ramla and various archeological sites in Israel, such as Tiberias and Khirbat Minya.

Ettinghausen mentions a type of box used to serve sweets, called *kaseh-ye chasham* (a bowl in the form of an eye socket) and he notes that this type was particularly common in a closed version.[14] If we accept the metaphor of an eye socket as representing the shape of a depression in the sweet-meat dish,[15] we can link Rosen-Ayalon's discussion and Ettinghausen's remark and suggest that these flat, round boxes, with small bowls inside, served as a metal version of the sweet-meat dish. Small bowls, made of thin hammered sheet, were found inside two of the boxes from Tiberias.[16] Box nos 1 and 2 were discovered without small bowls, but this may not be significant, considering their simpler mode of manufacture.

While attempting to understand the cultural implications of the metal finds from Serçe-Limani, Allan referred to the trousseau lists among the Geniza documents,[17] and suggested that the cylindrical box served as a soda-ash container *(ushnan)* with a small spoon.[18] The large number of vessels from the Caesarea hoard and the Tiberias workshop, as well as other vessels accumulated from various excavations, permits us to bridge the gap between material culture and the written documents. It can be assumed that such vessels were referred to in the Geniza documents.

The trousseau documents cited by Goitein dedicate special lists to 'copper', a term referring to all categories of metal vessels: lighting devices, household articles and personal items. A list dated 1140 presents four different receptacles: 'a large box

and another box inside it', 'a soda ash container, a box, part of a box'.[19] Other dowry documents refer to 'a box for ointment',[20] and 'a complete box',[21] which we can assume to be a box with its cover. The term 'a complete large copper box' can also be understood as a box with its bowls,[22] an interpretation relevant to box nos 1 and 2. A soda-ash box is cited either as 'a soda ash container',[23] or a 'complete set for soda ash',[24] which can be interpreted as a closed container holding soap flakes, together with its spoon. Thus from the trousseau lists we can conclude that the washing set comprised a box, the use of which is uncertain, and a soda-ash container.

A group of three small cylindrical boxes, without lids, was part of the Tiberias hoard. Khamis identifies the item as a cylindrical cup or small box.[25] These are probably the cast versions of the cylindrical boxes, similar to box no 4.

TYPOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOXES

Box no 1 is made of thick hammered sheet, shaped on an anvil. The centre of the base was marked by a lathe.[26] Box no 2 is made of thinly beaten sheet, decorated using fine chisels. The two boxes are characterised by a flat body, a low receptacle, and a lid with a stepped depression around the edge. The two parts of the box were joined by hinges

FIG. 13.4 Box no 2: view of the base. Drawing Ayala Lester.

extending from the side of the box to the centre of the lid. A clasp, comprised of a buckle with a loop and a pin, locked the box. Box no 1 has two hinges, rectangular in section, which culminate in decorative pairs of twisted interlaced patterns. Each of the hinges is attached to the lid by small nails. A similar box from Tiberias is decorated with the same kind of hinges and clasp.[27]

The prototype of these flat, round boxes is unknown; however, hinges of a wooden box, culminating in a flower arrangement, were found at the excavations at Ballana and Qustul in Egypt, and date to the sixth century.[28] Hinges ending with floral patterns, and a plate decorated with twisted interlace patterns, appear on a pen-box found in Egypt, probably dating to the eighth century.[29] The hinges end in the form of a calyx, similar to the hinge that appears on box no 2. Allan notes the Roman influence of engraved circular decoration and makes a comparison with an example from Lesvos Island (Mytilene) in the Aegean Sea, as well as other examples from the Byzantine world.[30]

During the Roman period the deep lathe cutting of bases of vessels was intended to strengthen the base and also express the craftsman's expertise.[31] In the Islamic period this feature, common on early Roman metal vessels, was adopted to decorate the entire vessel. Delicate pairs of engraved circles on walls and bases of vessels became one of the typical decorative characteristics of metal vessels during the Fatimid period.

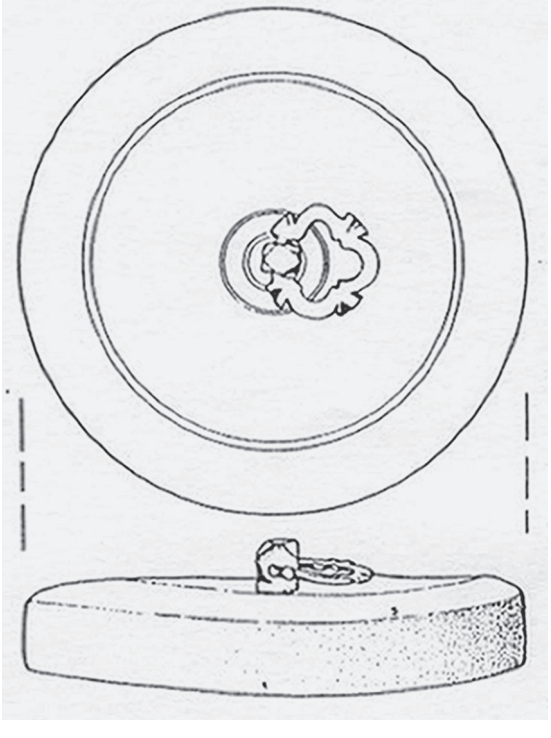

FIG. 13.5 Cover of box no 3. IAA No 96-400. Drawing Ayala Lester.

Box no 4 is decorated with pairs of circles done on the lathe. It is heavily damaged and only part of the walls and base exist, with the remnant of a flat rim. The shape is similar to a box found at Serçe-Limani.[32] A cover was fitted to a vertical recess on the rim. The box was probably used for *ushnan* soap flakes, as part of a personal washing set.

Baer and Allan refer to the bevelled edges of lids from the Ayyubid period, such as a box bearing the name of the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Aziz (r.1231–33).[33] Lid no 3 is characterised by the bevelled edges of the lid. Allan discussed the origin of metal vases from the Ayyubid period. He relates them to Fatimid metal vessels which had a Roman–Byzantine prototype.[34] The cylindrical box, with its bevelled cover, can be given as an example of the entire sequence. The shape of these Ayyubid boxes was inspired by typological features of box no 3. However, its prototype is based on Roman receptacles such as a lead urn case from Italy, datable 50–150. The case has a domed cusped cover with slanting walls.[35] The slanted characteristics of these vessels reappear on bases of ladles from the hoard. The prototype of this can be found in Roman ladles from the first century AD, such as found in Pompeii.[36] It can be assumed that these types of vessel from Italy reached Egypt and Syria during the early Roman period. Thus, this group of Fatimid boxes, influenced by a Roman prototype, became the model for the Ayyubid boxes. They join other Ayyubid metal vessels that originated in the Fatimid period, as first mentioned by Allan.[37]

STYLISTIC CONSIDERATIONS OF THE BOXES

Box no 1

The ornamented hinges attached to the lid, together with the missing handle, were the sole decorative elements of the box. The two hinges and clasp are identical and are made of narrow arms, culminating in symmetrically twisting tendrils with a bud-shaped termination. This pattern originates in the classical motif of the palmette which decorates a group of lustre-painted bowls datable to the first decades of the eleventh century. Pinder-Wilson was the first to identify the group,[38] and later Jenkins dealt with the motif of the palmette and its iconography on Egyptian lustre-decorated bowls.[39]

The most prominent example for the discussion is the bowl from the British Museum decorated with alternating, schematically interlaced palmette patterns radiating from the centre.[40] One set of patterns is based upon a straight band that rises from the centre of the plate in the form of a tree trunk with rounded foliage. The second set of palmettes is more stylised and is based on two facing half-palmettes that create a lozenge-shaped pattern with half-palmettes tangential to the central pattern. The inside of another bowl from the Cairo museum is decorated with hares carrying stylised branches in their

mouths, which is dated by Caiger-Smith to between 900 and 1075.[41] These branches are a stylised version of the traditional scene of an animal carrying a leaf. The pattern is based upon the outlines of the palmette with scrolls flanking the sides.

If we compare the decoration of the clasp and hinges of box no 1 with the design on the lustre bowls, it can be seen that the schematic palmette pattern is common to both. The straight arm of the hinge represents the trunk and the interlaced design signifies the bough of the tree with its symmetrically twisting branches. The technical limitations of the metal casting did not allow more complicated pattern variations. The idea of the stylised pattern harks back to Samarra style B.[42] The intervals, enclosed within the 'tendrils' on the cover of the box, served to create the impression of depth when the design was transferred from the three-dimensional 'bevelled style' to two dimensions on the lustre-painted bowls and on box no 1.

Jenkins ascribes this design to textiles originating in Egypt in the sixth and seventh centuries.[43] A similar, but less stylised palmette pattern decorates the pages of Moshe ben Asher's *Codex of the Prophets*, completed in Tiberias in 895.[44] Pinder-Wilson believed that these designs were used in Qur'an manuscripts to separate the various chapters. For this specific pattern he points to a few pages from a Qur'an manuscript presented to the Great Mosque of Damascus.[45] This palmette motif tradition started in Iraq in the ninth century and reached Egypt during the Tulunid and Ikhshidid periods.[46] Thus, while producing these hinges, these artisans adopted a pattern that had previously been used to decorate Qur'an manuscripts. One can only speculate if this pattern in fact bestowed a degree of distinction to this box.

Box no 2

The ornamental configuration of the lid is based on alternately plain and densely decorated bands. Together with the decoration on the walls of the receptacle and the decorated band on the base, we have a very balanced and comprehensive design. The lid is decorated, in the centre, with a wide band that has meticulously worked twisted tendrils. One of the ladles from the hoard bears the same decorated band, but the design is not as finely worked. The inscription near the rim can be partly deciphered, as it was probably etched by a craftsman who was not conversant in Arabic but made every effort to maintain its calligraphic character. The inscription bestows good wishes on its owner. Only the first word – *baraka* (blessing) – and the last – *li-s[ahibihi]* (to its owner) – could be deciphered.

Between the inscription and the floral band is a plain band that has a delicate decoration composed of arches enclosing bud designs with triangles on both sides.

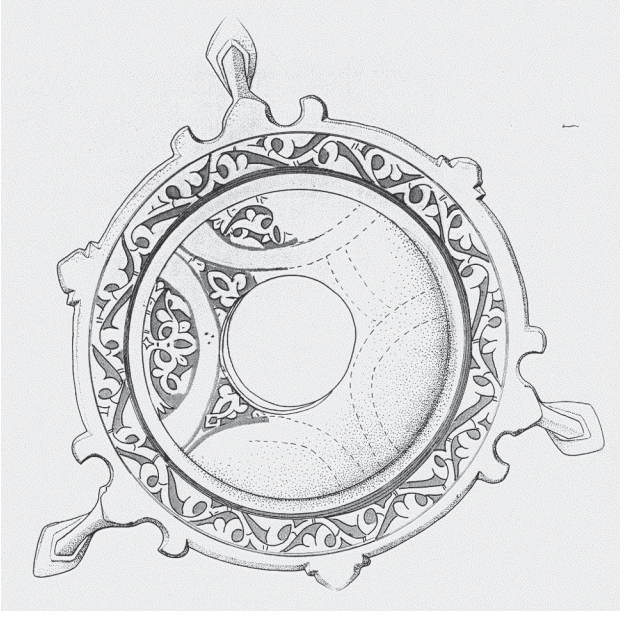

FIG. 13.6 Base of a lampstand from the hoard. IAA No 95-3499/1. Drawing Ayala Lester.

There is a diamond-shaped cluster of dots between each arch. This decorative motif of an arch enclosing a bud appears on the base of one of the most ornate lampstands from the hoard. The round base of the lampstand is divided into four arches with buds and tendrils (Fig. 13.6). Bud designs, together with dots forming a diamond shape, also appear as a filler pattern on silver bracelets from the Fatimid period.[47]

The base of the box is decorated by a band with an undulating stem from which spring leaves in the form of half-palmettes. An identical band decorates the rim of the lamp stand and the base of one of the buckets from the hoard.

These examples demonstrate the reappearance of decorative motifs within Fatimid metalwork on various vessels of different sizes and on Fatimid jewellery. Several patterns are consistently used as filling patterns, while other designs are used to embellish circular bands. The sides of the receptacle are decorated with two bands of a rope design. The guilloche patterns appear on other metal vessels from the hoard, including the base of a ladle and rims of decorated buckets. Allan attributes the origin of the pattern to Syria.[48]

The pattern is found on the border of a scarf from Egypt, datable to the fifth century,[49] and on the shoulder of a pottery ewer, from the fifth or sixth century.[50] The guilloche pattern was common in al-Andalus during the tenth and eleventh centuries where it was often used on the carved ivories.[51] The guilloche pattern is also found on the western minaret of the al-Hakim mosque in Cairo (1013).[52]

Box no 3

A lid with a handle identical to no 3 was found in the Tiberias hoard.[53] This type of handle was used on a variety of vessels such as boxes, buckets and caskets. The handle has a trifoliate shape with two pointed bud-shaped protrusions between the trifoliate 'leaves'. This is the only handle of its kind found in Caesarea, but in the Tiberias hoard they are common and appear together with the boxes, on a bell-like lid of a ewer and as separate items.[54] Another trifoliate handle was found at Fustat.[55] The handle is attached to the cover by a protruding pin. The pin was cast separately and later faceted. A small hole was drilled through the pin and a metal wire was threaded through it to attach the handle and thereby provide a hinge-like movement. Two large trifoliate handles (4.7 and 4cm in diameter) were found in the Tiberias cache.[56]

SUMMARY

These four boxes are round with a shallow depression near the rim and are based on a common tradition. In box no 3, the lid is bevelled, a trait that harks back to a Roman prototype. The boxes were made by hammering and the hinges were formed by sand casting. Box no 2 was decorated using chisels of various sizes: one for delineating the inscription and the central band, a second for hammering the background of the patterns, and a fine chisel which was used to create the dotted pattern. Box nos 1 and 2 are probably metal versions of the sweat-meat dish. Box no 1 is made of a thick hammered sheet, while box no 2 is much thinner. Hammered vessels of various thicknesses also appear among the groups of trays and braziers in the hoard. It is reasonable to assume that the differing quality of metals affected the value of the vessels. The merchant was thus able to offer for sale items of various qualities.

Lid no 3 and box no 4 are part of a personal washing set that consisted of 'a box, a soap-ash container, a ewer, a bucket and a dipper, and a jug for olive oil, a [portable oil] lamp…'. [57] All of these items are found in the Caesarea hoard and probably would have been sold as parts of a personal washing set.

This group of boxes introduces different styles of decoration that reappear on other Fatimid metal vessels and in different types of Fatimid art such as ceramics, wood, ivory and jewellery.

The common convention within Islamic art that uses inscriptions, together with vegetal motifs, presents a Fatimid stylistic interpretation.[58] Motifs such as the dot or guilloche patterns serve as minor and marginal decorative elements continuing

a Byzantine tradition. The sole pattern typical to Fatimid metalware is shallowly engraved pairs of circles on bases and walls of vessels. Khamis suggested Tiberias as the production centre of the boxes based upon the large number of boxes and parts. It is probable that the Caesarea boxes originate from the same workshop.

Catalogue

Box no 1

Material: Brass

Production technique: The box is made of 2mm thick brass sheet. The receptacle was made by hammering, and the base was thickened and decorated using a lathe. The lid was made by the same method with the point at the box's centre thickened and decorated with lathed circles, while the graduated lip was made by hammering on an anvil. The hinges were prepared by sand casting, and attached to the lid with tiny nails.

Condition: The base of the box and lid are complete. Parts of the hinge, which joined the lid to the receptacle, are missing. One end of the interlace pattern on one of the decorated hinges is broken. The carrying handle of the box and the engraved handle are missing. The metal is brownish-red. There are green stains of metal corrosion.

Dimensions:

Box base and sides:

Base diameter – 25.5cm
Rim diameter – 25.8cm
Side height – 4.2cm
Side thickness – 0.18cm

Box lid:

Lid diameter – 26.8cm
Lid height – 2.5cm
Side thickness – 0.16cm

Total box height – 7.2cm

Weight:

Receptacle weight: 1.216kg
Lid weight: 0.942kg
Total weight: 2.158kg

Box no 2

Material: Brass

Production technique: The box is made from a sheet hammered on an anvil, and decorated by engraving with fine chisels. The decorated hinges and the clasp were prepared by sand casting and attached with tiny nails.

Condition: The base of the box is rent and cracked in several places. A large rend on the base continues towards the side. There are brownish-red corrosion stains on the inner and outer sides of the box. Rends on the lid, close to the rim, and holes on the lid were caused by chiselling during the decoration process. One of two pairs of hinges

is missing and the bottom section of the other pair is broken. The carrying handle at the centre of the lid is missing. The metal is brittle and part of the hammered sheet is missing.

Dimensions:

Box base and sides:

Base diameter – 19.55cm
Rim diameter – 19.7cm
Side height – 3.8cm
Side thickness – 0.15cm

Box lid:

Lid diameter – 9.7cm
Lid height – 7cm
Side thickness – 0.9cm

Total box height – 5.6cm

Weight:

Receptacle weight: 0.282kg
Lid weight: 0.206kg
Total weight: 0.486kg

Box no 3

Condition: Intact. The metal kept its gold tinge and there are green stains from metal corrosion.

Dimensions:

Diameter – 10.5cm
Height – 1.6cm

Lid weight – 0.034kg

Box no 4

Material: Brass

Production technique: The receptacle was produced by hammering and decorated on the lathe.

Condition: Part of the base and most of the walls are missing. Rents on the walls. The metal kept its gold tinge and there are tiny stains of metal corrosion.

Dimensions:

Base diameter – 8.4cm
Receptacle height – 6.5cm

Weight: 0.063kg

Receptacle weight: 0.0063kg

NOTES

1 Lester, Arnon and Polak 1999.
2 Lester 2011.
3 Baer 1983: 76.
4 *Trésors* 1998: cat. no 53; Seipel 1998: no 71.
5 Khamis 2006, vol. I: 107–11, nos 325–55; vol. II: Pls 168–94.
6 Lester 2004: Fig. 5.4.
7 Lester 2004: Fig. 5.3; 7.
8 Ploug 1969: 16, Figs 1.1–6.10
9 Lester 2011, vol. I: 77; vol. II: Pl. 4–6.
10 Khamis 2006, vol. I: 111.
11 Rosen-Ayalon 1973: 261–62, Fig. 55.2.
12 Rosen-Ayalon 1973: 262.
13 Rosen-Ayalon1973: Pl. 51.1
14 Ettinghausen 1959: 200.
15 Atıl 1973: no 76.
16 Khamis 2006, vol. I: 276; vol. II: Fig. 325: 171, see also Khamis's article in this volume.
17 Goitein 1967: 88.
18 Allan 2004: 355.
19 Goitein 1983, App. D, Doc. 3: 324.
20 Goitein 1983, App. D, Doc. 1: 316.
21 Goitein 1983, App. D, Doc. 4: 327.
22 Goitein 1983, App. D, Doc. 5: 331.
23 Goitein 1983, App. D, Doc. 2: 321.
24 Goitein 1983, App. D, Doc. 1: 315.
25 Khamis 2006, vol. II: cat. no 316; vol. II: Pl. 159.
26 Strong and Brown 1976: 34–35, Fig. 36.
27 Khamis 2006, vol. II: cat. no 329; vol. II: Pl. 177
28 Emery and Kirwan 1938, vol. 1: 281, Fig. 99.
29 Friedman 1989: 169, no 79.
30 Allan 2004: 353.
31 Strong and Brown 1975: 34–35, Fig. 36; Hayse 1984: nos 121, 129, 146, 147.
32 Allan 2004: 350–53, Figs 20–25.
33 Paris 2001: no 43: 51; Baer 1983: 76, Fig. 56; Allan 2004: 353.
34 Allan 1985.
35 Hayes 1984: no 263.
36 Tassinari 1993: no 9974.
37 Allan 1985: 136–39.
38 Pinder-Wilson 1959.

39 Jenkins 1968b.
40 See Pinder-Wilson 1959: Pl. 2.
41 Caiger-Smith 1985: 40, no 15.
42 Ettinghausen, Grabar and Jenkins-Medina 2001: 57, Fig. 82.
43 Jenkins 1968: 122, Fig. 6.
44 Pinder-Wilson 1961: Pl. 18.
45 Pinder-Wilson 1961.
46 Jenkins 1968b.
47 It occurs for example on a silver bracelet from the jewellery hoard found at Ramla (IAA No 2008-641): see Lester 2008: Pl. 2.
48 Allan 2004: 350.
49 Weitzmann 1979: no 112.
50 Friedman 1989: no 8.
51 Dodds 1992: no 4.
52 Creswell 1952, vol I: Fig. 37, Pl. 29:d.
53 Khamis 2006, vol. II: no 592; vol. II: Pl. 258.
54 Khamis 2006: Pl. 123, no 234; Pl. 174, no 327; Pl. 175, no 328; Pl. 184, no 334.
55 Scanlon 1981: Fig. 12.
56 Khamis 2006, vol. II: cat. nos 354–55; vol. II: Pl. 194: 354–55.
57 Goitein 1983: App. D, Doc. 2: 321.
58 Khamis 2006: 109.

14

ISLAMIC EMBROIDERIES FROM EGYPT: SHIFTS IN TASTE, CHANGE IN STATUS

RUTH BARNES

The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford holds a remarkable collection of embroideries that were found in Egypt, and range chronologically from the Fatimid era in the tenth century to the end of the Mamluk period in the early sixteenth century, with some samples likely to be of later date. The collection was donated to the museum in 1941 by the Egyptologist Percy Newberry. He and his wife Essie had a life-long interest in textiles, and between 1900 and about 1930 they collected a great number of them from Egypt, North Africa and other regions of the Middle East. They donated their collections to various museums, including the Victoria and Albert Museum and Leeds University. The Whitworth Gallery in Manchester received Essie Newberry's fine collection of Central Asian embroidered *suzani*, and the Embroiderers' Guild also benefited from her donations. But the greatest gift of all came to the Ashmolean, when Percy Newberry decided to leave to the museum his collection of 1010 mainly medieval Islamic embroideries, 1226 Indian block-printed textiles, and a small group of 36 tapestry-woven Coptic textiles.

THE COLLECTION'S HISTORY

Early in 1941, E.T. Leeds, then Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, prepared a memorandum for the Museum's Visitors:[1]

> Professor P.E. Newberry, 14 January 1941
> Offer of his collection of textiles.
>
> From 1890, at which time the collection of mediaeval and later ceramics from the old mounds was rife,[2] he applied himself to the formation of a collection of textiles, embroidered and printed materials from the same sources, and has continued since the Great War, securing most of the more important examples. These textiles (largely fragments), important in the history of pattern, include specimens of materials imported into Egypt from India, others with Arabic inscriptions… They number thousands… The printed textiles, dating from the 12th to the 16th century, and embroideries from Old Cairo are unequalled.

The total number of textiles to be donated was close to two thousand three hundred, most of them fragments, as Leeds noted. The donation was accepted, and Newberry replied to the news on 3 March 1941: 'Many thanks for your letter telling me that the Visitors have agreed to accept my collection of textiles and printed fabrics from Egypt. I am very glad that the collection will have a permanent home and will be available for students…'.

The transfer of the entire collection to Oxford was not completed until after the end of World War II, when it was placed into the care of the Department of Antiquities.[3] It was first recorded in a card index, and in 1956 a typescript list of contents was compiled, but it took several decades before research on the collection took off in earnest. This only happened once the Islamic and Indian components of the collection were transferred to the Department of Eastern Art in 1984. James Allan, who then was Assistant Keeper of the Islamic collections, was instrumental in this move.[4] Although textiles were not his field of expertise, he took a considerable curatorial interest in the Newberry Collection and encouraged other scholars to make use of it. He invited the textile historian Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood to help him sort and accession more than six hundred of the Islamic embroideries between 1984 and 1988. Marianne Ellis, a practising embroiderer with an in-depth knowledge of the history of embroidery techniques, catalogued the remaining items and added a detailed technical analysis.[5] My own research initially focused on the Indian trade textiles, but eventually I was able to build on Ellis's work and complete the collections catalogue.[6]

Between the early 1900s and 1930s, Percy and Essie Newberry spent a good part of every year in Egypt, where they participated in some of the key archaeological excavations

of the time. Both worked closely with Howard Carter as part of the Tutankhamun team: Percy reported on the botanical specimens found in the tomb, while Essie assisted with the recovery and partial restoration of the textiles.[7] In 1929, Newberry accepted a chair as Professor of Ancient History and Archaeology at Cairo University, a post he held until 1932, when he and his wife returned to England and settled in Surrey. Their regular visits to Egypt gave both an opportunity to have first choice when buying historical textiles. The result is a remarkable collection of Indian and Islamic textile fragments. The sheer size of both groups allows us to draw conclusions about how representative the material is of wider production. In this respect the Newberry Collection is unique; while other museums have similar collections of Islamic and Indian textiles, these are usually numbered by the dozen, and such a small sample size cannot offer a representative picture. But a collection of a thousand to twelve hundred pieces certainly can.[8]

Many of the textiles have the characteristic appearance of archaeological fabrics: they are fragmentary and have been exposed to the destructive effects of soil burial. However, none of the pieces actually come from provenanced sites, but were all bought from dealers in Cairo and Alexandria. No definite archaeological source can be claimed for them, although similar material is often associated with Fustat, the Islamic settlement that was founded after the Arab conquest of Egypt. For two centuries after the establishment of the Fatimid court at Cairo (al-Qahirah), Fustat remained the country's major urban centre. In 1168–69 it was intentionally set on fire and briefly abandoned, to avoid capture by the Crusading Frankish army that tried to conquer the city. Although Fustat was later resettled during Saladin's rule, it never recovered its old vitality; largely abandoned by the end of the thirteenth century, it became Cairo's waste-disposal site. Only the area near the Nile and the mosque of 'Amr as well as the streets to the east of the old Byzantine fort remained inhabited; today this is still the religious centre for the Coptic community, with several churches and convents located there. On its edge stands the Ben Ezra synagogue where the Geniza papers, studied by Goitein and others, were found.[9] By the early twentieth century, the area had become the source of collectable fragments of ceramics, glass and textiles that found their way into the shops of local antiquities dealers. Although strictly unprovenanced, these items may partly have come from the disposal mounds, but the grave sites of southern Fustat are also a likely source. Until the early 1980s, parts of the rubbish heaps to the northeast of the Coptic community were an important archaeological site, albeit with problematic stratigraphy.[10] In 1985 Roland-Pierre Gayraud started excavations at the southern site of Istabl 'Antar, which includes grave sites associated with the Fatimid dynasty.[11] The latter site and the last excavation season carried out by Scanlon and Kubiak at Fustat-C brought to light textiles that are also of relevance to the Newberry Collection.[12]

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

Despite the fragmentary state of the 1010 embroidered textiles, their stitched designs are still clearly visible. The vast majority are embroidered in silk on a linen ground fabric. A few fragments are cotton, and occasionally cotton or flax may also be used for the embroidery thread, but these are all comparatively coarse and quite distinct from the high-quality textiles which comprise the majority of the collection. More than twenty-five different stitch techniques are used, some of which need to be further divided into subgroups, based, for example, on whether the stitch moves with the weave or crosses diagonally. By far the most common are versions of running stitch, a close-counted herringbone, split and chain stitch, and a variety of filling stitches. I will revisit the significance of stitch techniques and their distribution below, in the section on the dating of the textiles.

It also is possible to draw conclusions about the original function of the textiles. Seams and hems clearly indicate that many of the embroidered fragments were once

FIG. 14.1 Child's tunic, Mamluk period (1250–1517). Linen with silk embroidery in pattern darning running stitch. C-14 date 1290–1440. Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford (EA1984.353).

used as sashes or shawls, or were part of larger garments, such as tunics. A complete child's tunic (Fig. 14. 1) and several caps in the collection confirm the use of embroidered designs as embellishments for dress. In addition, a large part of the collection was clearly once used for furnishings, such as pillows or wall hangings. These hangings and curtains may have been used both inside and outdoors. Large tabs and rectangles, frequently appliquéd, were almost certainly once part of banners or flags, used in processions and other display events. One fine Mamluk embroidery has a densely woven, strong backing and may have been part of a tent.[13]

The relative fineness of linen in most fragments, the density of weave, and the silk embroidery threads used all suggest a clientele of comfortable economic standing. The textiles were made for people who could afford good-quality clothing, with finely embroidered decorations. Blazon emblems on some fragments identify the wearer with the Mamluk court, as they link them to a specific office in the sultan's entourage. One of these identifies the owner with the office of cupbearer, as well as master of the robes (Plate 10). Some textiles are of such fine quality that they could only have been made for a very wealthy person (Fig. 14.2). The generally high standard of embroidery

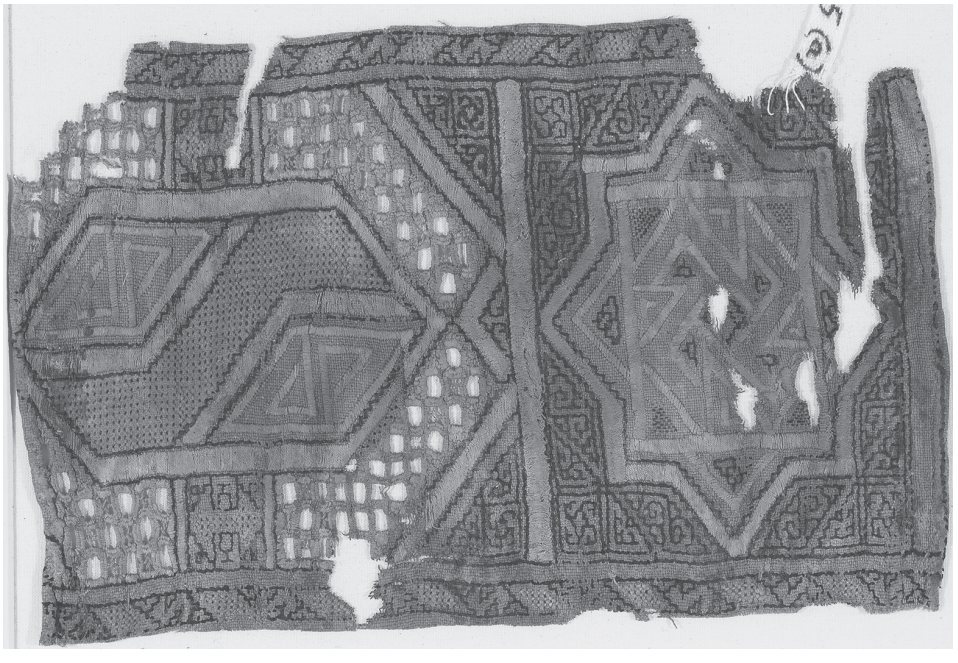

FIG. 14.2 Sash or shawl fragment, Mamluk period. Linen with silk embroidery in satin, and double running stitch, pulled and drawn thread, needle weaving, loop stitch. C-14 date 1290–1440. Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford (EA1984.445a).

suggests that they were produced professionally, woven and stitched in workshops some of which were obviously supplying the court.

Yet – as Patricia Baker pointed out in her survey of Islamic textiles – the role of embroideries in Islamic societies has so far been a neglected topic in the discourse of Islamic art history.[14] The single major exception is the study of *tiraz* textiles, the court-related robes of honour with embroidered (and later woven) inscriptions. The word *tiraz* also came to stand for the courtly workshops that produced the textiles. Their production was under the direct monopoly and control of the caliph, and was given the same importance as the mint producing coins, because they both bore the name of the ruler. Such robes were initially given to courtiers, as special recognition of office and loyalty, but eventually spread more widely throughout the community. Their royal patronage as well as their wider consumption has been recognised and studied by scholars of Islamic art and culture for decades.[15] In Egypt the embroidered *tiraz* were widely employed in the Fatimid era (969–1171), but began to be replaced by tapestry-woven inscription bands and finally lost their importance during the Mamluk period. But as the Newberry Collection shows, embroidery had a much wider application.

DATING THE EMBROIDERIES

The inscriptions on *tiraz* textiles often indicate the year and place of manufacture, and may even record the name of the embroiderer. One of the pieces of *tiraz* in the Newberry Collection is dated 288/901 (Fig. 14.3), and proclaims that it was made in Tinnis in

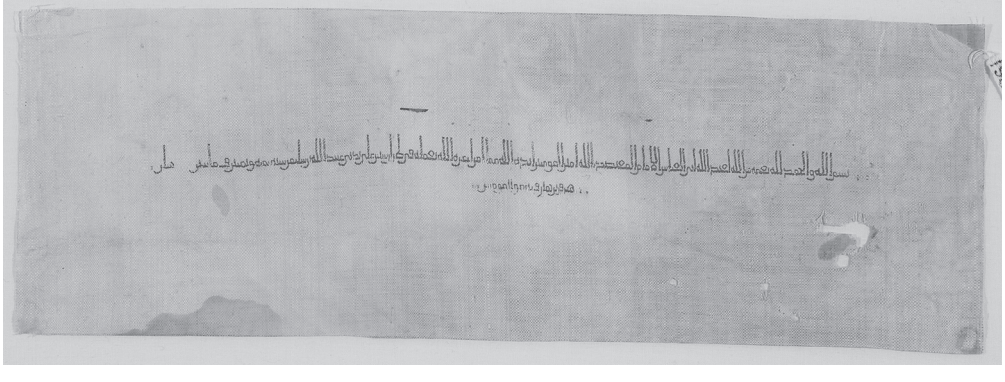

FIG. 14.3 Tiraz band, dated 288/901. Linen with silk embroidery in running, slanted satin, straight, back and couching stitch. The inscription mentions both Harun, the ruler of Egypt 896–905, and the caliph al-Mu'tadid bi'llah (r.892–902). Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford (EA1988.47).

the Nile Delta 'at the hands of 'Ubaydallah son of Sulayman'. A second *tiraz* is dated 320/932 and was probably produced in Baghdad.[16] A strikingly similar *tiraz* inscription was found on a shroud excavated by Gayraud at the southern cemeteries of Fustat, with the same date.[17] But only a small part of the Newberry collection is made up of *tiraz*: there are 32 fragments, of which 11 give evidence for date and provenance. The majority of the embroideries have no inscriptions, and they could initially only be dated on stylistic grounds. Following this approach, the conclusion was that the material ranged in date from as early as the Fatimid era, with a vast number from the Mamluk period, extending into the period of Ottoman expansion over the Levant and Egypt. Newberry himself had already arranged his embroidery collection according to this time frame.

When I began to work on the collection, one of my main aims was to refine its chronology, by applying radiocarbon dating to certain stylistically 'typical' pieces, as well as to fragments that posed questions of dating. While radiocarbon dating cannot provide a precise date, it can usually help to locate organic material by century. The results also often give a wide date range which can be narrowed down by making use of historical and stylistic analysis. As the analysis becomes increasingly unreliable for material of more recent centuries, textiles that were likely to be from the Ottoman era in Egypt (post-1516) were not included. A total of 48 samples were analysed for their C-14, and calibrated dates were established.[18] In general the results fit comfortably into the established history of Islamic art in Egypt. However, while these dates were generally reassuring on stylistic grounds, they helped to obtain a considerably more refined picture of both continuity and change from the Fatimid era to the Ayyubid and later Mamluk periods. They did provide some surprises: the fragment of an appliqué banner showing a lion or leopard, previously dated on iconographic grounds to the Mamluk reign of Baybars (1260–77), is now confirmed to be Fatimid in date.[19] Three of the *tiraz* textiles were also analysed for C-14, and one of them (EA1984.49) proved to be problematic.[20] Nancy Britton gave the inscription as reading 'Glory to the servant of God, Ja'far, the Imam, Muqtadir bi'llah', and associated it with the tenth-century Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir (r.908–32 with interruptions); however, the radiocarbon analysis, which was repeated twice, placed the textile a century later.[21]

Interestingly, the chronology obtained through the radiocarbon analysis clearly indicates a preference for certain techniques at different times, a fact which had not previously been noted. The Fatimid embroidery thus falls into two groups. The first is generally based on naturalistic representations, of plants and birds, as we also find in other media. The second group is made up of *tiraz* textiles. The stitch technique of both groups is overwhelmingly outline, stem, split, or chain stitch, in other words techniques that support flowing, organic lines, applied in a free style that may ignore the strict vertical/horizontal structure of warp and weft. With a few exceptions,

the embroideries of the first group – those showing naturalistic representations – are pleasing, but not of outstanding quality.[22] However, high-quality embroidery is certainly mentioned in written sources during the Fatimid era, including references to luxury gold-thread stitching.[23] The most famous surviving example is the gold embroidered mantle of Roger II, made by craftsmen in Sicily. From the surviving body of Fatimid embroideries made in Egypt, however, this is the exception rather than the rule. Embroidery of exceptional quality is primarily in evidence in *tiraz* textiles, produced in royal workshops and used for calligraphic purposes. Apart from the *tiraz*, none of the Newberry embroideries from the Fatimid period can be placed in this category. For ornamental patterning of luxury textiles, a woven design executed in tapestry weave was the norm for textiles produced in Egypt at this time. Judging from the Newberry collection, embroidered garments made in Egypt (except for *tiraz*) were not luxury goods, although they were usually stitched onto a good-quality linen fabric. But it is likely that embroideries were second to pattern-woven dress with fine tapestry designs. It is possible that high-quality embroidery used at the Fatimid court and by wealthy members of Egyptian society in the eleventh century was not produced in Egypt, with the exception of *tiraz* production.

The radiocarbon-dated results show that this changed dramatically during the second half of the twelfth century, coinciding with the arrival of the Ayyubids. Embroideries of exceptional quality survive from Egypt from the beginning of the Ayyubid reign, that is from the end of the twelfth century (Plate 11). This represents a foreign influence that arrived in Cairene society at the time. The Ayyubid rulers, most recently from Syria but of Kurdish origin, seem to have brought an appreciation for high-quality and complex embroidery techniques with them. It is unclear in the current state of our knowledge if they moved craftsmen to their new places of political dominance, or if they relied on local workshops but imposed their own taste. It is also possible, of course, that these exceptional embroideries were produced in Syria or northern Iraq, and were imported into Egypt.

COUNTED STITCH TECHNIQUES

We also observe a significant change in stitch technique at this time. The early embroideries, specifically those of Ayyubid date, use laid couching and stem stitch, as well as buttonhole, and in that respect they do not depart technically from the Fatimid embroideries, although visually they create far denser and more complex images. This more free-style stitch technique used the embroidery thread like a drawing pen, creating an image or calligraphy on a woven surface without paying attention to the structure of that surface. Then a remarkable change occurred. Within a generation we find the dominance of counted

stitch, in particular counted running and double running-stitch, but also counted satin and herringbone stitches. Previously these had rarely been used in embroidery surviving from Egypt. The earliest example that I am aware of comes from the very end of the Fatimid period: its inscription *ana qamr* ('I am a moon') is a quote from the Shi'ite author Rashid al-Din ibn Shahrashub, who died in 1192.[24] At some time between the early and mid-thirteenth century, however, many of the designs take on a strongly geometric form, with a mathematically observed variation of rhombic shapes, diamond patterns, triangular and rectangular forms which are broken down into geometric fragments, to be endlessly reassembled in new designs. Even when the embroidered motifs are organic rather than geometric, they are often carried out in counted filling stitches.

None of the finely worked counted stitch embroideries have any evidence of tracing or drawing the designs onto the fabric prior to stitching, although a few of the free-style floral designs do have these, and can still be discerned where the embroidery silk has deteriorated. We can only interpret these intricate counted designs as a feat in mathematical understanding, where small-scale geometric units are combined to form an overall picture of infinite complexity. We observe a completely new skill and aesthetic in these textiles, which has its parallels in the Seljuk art and architecture of Eastern Turkey, Iraq and Iran, and in the Ghaznavid architecture of Afghanistan. Even when blown up a hundred times into tile or stucco architectural ornaments, there is still a clear conceptual relationship between the organisation of design on these eastern Islamic towers and façades and our minutely counted embroidery bands. Recent discoveries of textiles in Afghanistan support the connection: these garments and fragments are also decorated with counted-running-stitch designs which are built up from small pattern units, not unlike the embroidery that developed in the Mamluk period.[25]

The Newberry Collection provides a further glimpse of the training involved to produce these stitches, as it contains numerous samplers which were obviously practice pieces and exercises in building up complex designs from basic pattern units. Among those so far analysed by radiocarbon dating, the earliest is dated to the late twelfth century (Plate 12), which suggests that this method of building up designs from carefully counted pattern units was beginning to take hold in Egypt simultaneously with the establishment of the Ayyubid dynasty.

At least by the time the Mamluk sultans ruled in Egypt and Syria, this exotic (for the local clientele) Eastern aesthetic had swept the fashion scene of Cairo. As we can tell from the quality of fabric – which has a high thread count coinciding with a fine thread diameter of the linen and the precision of the silk embroidery – these textiles were produced for a well-to-do clientele. Courtly emblems showed that they were certainly used in the sultan's palace, but they seem to have had a much wider distribution, soon being used in textiles for an urban middle class, rather than

reserved for an elite. Embroidery as a means to decorate textiles, going far beyond the rather austere *tiraz* inscriptions, had certainly arrived to stay, and such textiles became a highly developed form of visual representation. Ultimately the designs created in counting techniques influenced embroiderers throughout the eastern Mediterranean and beyond. They had a significant impact on the development of Greek island embroidery,[26] and both technique and designs gave a new impetus to European embroidery. In the sixteenth century they started to appear in the sample pages of embroidery pattern books printed in Germany and the Netherlands, which were disseminated throughout Europe.

This essay has discussed an outstanding collection and has attempted to introduce a chronological sequence to it. The collection's size and the number of radiocarbon-dated samples from it helps us to reach a wider understanding of the history and iconography of embroideries made in Egypt between the tenth and fifteenth centuries, far beyond the well-studied field of surviving *tiraz* textiles. It was mainly due to James Allan's conviction that the Newberry Collection had an important place in the history of Islamic art that this research could be carried out. He gave it his full support and encouragement. The collection is now fully catalogued and analysed for its materials and technique. Further research awaits a new generation of young scholars with an interest in the importance of textiles to Islamic art history.

NOTES

1 As the Museum's Governing Board was known. The note is kept with Newberry's correspondence in the archives of the Griffith Institute, Sackler Library. Leeds's letters to Newberry are filed under 28/61–71 and 49/13–15.

2 This is a reference to Fustat.

3 See Barnes 1997, vol. I: 19 for details of the delays in transfer. Most of these were to do with the location of the collections during the war.

4 He worked closely together with Helen Whitehouse, who at the time was Assistant Keeper of the Egyptian collections in the Department of Antiquities.

5 See Ellis 2001a, 2001b. She became so intrigued by the collection that she also funded its conservation.

6 See Barnes 1997 for the publication of the Indian collection. The electronic publication of the embroidery catalogue is currently being prepared as part of the Jameel project, based in the Department of Eastern Art, Ashmolean Museum: see http://www.jameelcentre.ashmolean.org.

7 Unfortunately most of the textiles eventually recovered were damaged beyond redemption, see Barnes 1997, vol. I: 14, n. 10.

8 The Newberrys' collection of late antique textiles is remarkable for its quality, but not for its size. These objects remain in the Ashmolean's Department of Antiquities.

9 Goitein 1967, vol. I.

10 See Bahgat and Gabriel 1921; Scanlon 1986; Kubiak 1987; Scanlon and Kubiak 1989.

11 Gayraud 1986, 1999.

12 Mackie 1989.

13 Illustrated in Ellis 2001a: 62–63.

14 Baker 1995.

15 Britton 1938, 1943; Kühnel and Bellinger 1952; Serjeant 1972; Contadini 1998; Stillman and Sanders, 'Tirāz' (EI²).

16 Britton 1943: 161, Fig. 14.2.

17 Gayraud 1999: Pl. XXXIV, 97.

18 The analysis was carried out at the Oxford University Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit, based at the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art. It was funded by the unit's support from the Natural Environmental Research Council (NERC) Scientific Service funding for the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Dating Service (ORADS).

19 This is EA1984.137.

20 Illustrated in Ellis 2001a: 13.

21 Britton 1943: 161.

22 See, e.g., EA1984.508 and EA1993.248 in Ellis 2001a: 14, 15.

23 Contadini 1998: 51–52.

24 It has the accession number EA1984.402. Allan 2003b.

25 The fragments came up for private sale in the late 1990s. As far as I am aware, these finds have not yet been published.

26 See Trilling 1983.

15

METALWORKING IN DAMASCUS AT THE END OF THE OTTOMAN PERIOD: AN ANALYSIS OF THE *QĀMŪS AL-ṢINĀʿĀT AL-SHĀMIYYA*

MARCUS MILWRIGHT

Damascus has a long and illustrious reputation as a centre for metalworking. High-quality inlaid wares were produced in Damascus through the last years of the Ayyubid period and the early Mamluk sultanate.[1] Some indication of the scale and sophistication of the industry at this time is provided by the commissioning of 200 candlesticks – copper, silver and gold – from the metalworkers of Damascus by Sultan al-Ashraf Khalil in 1293.[2] There can be little doubt that the occupation of Damascus by the army of Timur in 1401–2 had a deleterious impact upon the crafts of the city. Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo (d.1412), the ambassador sent by Henry of Castile to the court of Timur, recalled that the Central Asian conqueror had taken the best Damascene artisans back with him to Samarqand.[3] Great cities generally have the capacity to rebound from such reverses of fortune, however. To judge by the testimony of European travellers of the fifteenth century, the manufactured goods to be found in Damascus were still much admired.[4] Writing about the crafts of Damascus in the latter part of the fifteenth century, ʿAbd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Badri (d.1503–4) remarks upon the goldworking of the city as well as the making of 'copper with [the use of] beating (*ḍarb*), piercing/cutting out (*tafṣīl*), and engravings (*nuqūsh*)'. Of gold, he writes that it was cast (*masbūk*), beaten (*maḍrūb*), drawn out (into threads?) (*mamdūd*) and inlaid (into other vessels?) (*marṣūʿ*).[5] Evidence for metalworking is also to be found in Arabic topographic texts of the late fifteenth or sixteenth century by the likes of al-Nuʿaymi (d.1521) and ʿAbd al-Basit al-ʿAlmawi (d.1573–74).[6]

If a certain degree of vitality in the metalworking of sixteenth-century Damascus can be inferred from these written sources, one might ask how this important craft

sector evolved during the remaining centuries of Ottoman rule. Such a large topic is beyond the scope of a short article, but I hope to address one aspect of it through an examination of a text composed in the last decades of the Ottoman period, the *Qāmūs al-ṣināʿāt al-Shāmiyya* (*Dictionary of the Damascene Crafts*, and from now on referred to as the *Qāmūs*). Compiled between about 1891 and 1905 by Muhammad Saʿid al-Qasimi (d.1900), Jamal al-Din Qasimi (d.1914) and Khalil al-ʿAzm, and first published in 1960, this important book provides an insight into the range of metalworking crafts practised in the Syrian capital, from the fashioning of jewellery and weapons to the manufacture of mundane items like ploughshares, padlocks, needles, mortars and lanterns.[7] Each craft (sing. *ṣināʿa*) in the *Qāmūs* is allocated a single chapter according to an alphabetic arrangement. While the extent and quality of the information contained within the individual chapters varies considerably, and the date or dates when the observations were made are not given, the comprehensive nature of the book – some 437 separate crafts are included – permits an assessment of the totality of manufacturing activities in Damascus and its immediate hinterland. In addition, the book was compiled at a crucial phase in the economic history of Syria; traditional crafts were facing a massive influx of cheap manufactured goods from Europe, and the first industrial facilities were being established in Damascus itself.[8]

METALS AND METALWORKING IN THE *QĀMŪS*

The principal metals discussed in the *Qāmūs* are copper (*nuḥās*), iron (*ḥadīd*), silver (*fiḍḍa*), and gold (*dhahab*), though mention is also made of zinc (*tūtiyā*), tin (*qaṣdīr*), and lead (*raṣāṣ*).[9] *Nuḥās* can be taken to mean both pure copper and a range of alloys, excluding brass (which is identified specifically in the text as *nuḥās aṣfar*). No use is made of the Arabic word for steel, *fūlādh*, with *ḥadīd* employed for both iron and steel (the context usually makes it apparent which is being referred to). Considerable amounts of scrap copper must have been available in Syria at this time. For instance, some 50,000kg of 'old' copper with a value of 57,500 francs was apparently exported from Beirut to France in 1894. Other metal was imported: the total value of the metals (copper, iron, tin, lead and zinc) sent from Europe in the same year to the *wilāya* of Syria is given as 2,500,000 francs.[10]

Predictably, the *Qāmūs* is replete with references to metal artefacts either sold by merchants or used in craft activities. To cite just a few examples: the antiques dealers (sing. *antakjī*) sold such things as swords, guns and copper items; the stationer (*ẓarrāf*) stocked steel writing pens (sing. *rīsh*); and iron bedsteads (sing. *sarīr*) were also available in the markets of Damascus.[11] Metals appear in other objects: brass was used for the

head (*ra's*, i.e. the section holding the tobacco) of narghiles; leather belts were equipped with iron/steel buckles (sing. *bazīm*); the frames of mirror might be 'painted with water gilding' (*madhūna bi-ma' al-dhahab*); and the *mukharri*s used a thin steel drill and brass rivets (sing. *mismār*) to repair broken porcelain and crystal glass vessels.[12]

The *Qāmūs* also lists numerous crafts engaging in the manufacture or decoration of metal objects (or objects in which metal is a principal component). These are: the copper beater (*naḥḥās*), the copper founder (*sakkāb*), the blacksmith (*ḥaddād*), the maker of mortars (*ḥawāwīnī*), the maker of needles (*abbār*), the locksmith (*ghālātī* or *qafīlātī*), the maker of firearms (*bunduqjī*), the maker of swords (*suyūfī*), the maker of lanterns (*fanārātī*), the tinner or tinsmith (*samkarī*), the jeweller (*ṣā'igh*), the goldsmith (*dhahabī*), the engraver of copper vessels (*naqqāsh*), the engraver of seal rings (*ḥakkāk al-khawātim*), and the embroiderer with silver wire (*mujarkash*). In the following paragraphs I organise these crafts into three categories according to the principal metals employed: copper and copper alloys; iron and steel; gold and silver.

Copper and copper alloys were used by many of the metalworkers of Damascus. The *naḥḥās* was responsible for the production of sheets of copper (sing. *ṣafīḥat al-nuḥās*). According to the *Qāmūs*, this was done by hand, hammering the metal to the desired dimensions and thickness.[13] Based in shops in their own *sūq*, the *naḥḥāsīn* seem to have worked largely according to the desires of the buyer (i.e. performing specific commissions), with set prices established for particular types and sizes of vessel. Listed among the items produced by the copper beaters are the casserole/saucepan (*ṭanjara*), bowl (*ṣaḥn*), shallow bowl for washing (*ṭabaq li'l-ghasl*), sieve (*miṣfan*), and frying pan (*maqālin*). Two other cooking vessels are mentioned – *kafkīr* (*?*) and *kabjāh* (*?*) – that I have been unable to identify. The manufacture of beaten copper pots and pans can still be seen in urban centres of the Middle East, and vessels of very large dimensions can be made using these techniques (Fig. 15.1). The chapter in the *Qāmūs* concludes that copper beating is an important craft generating acceptable (*muwāfiq*) profits and employing many people.

The casting of copper artefacts was the job of the *sakkāb*.[14] The *Qāmūs* introduces this chapter with the following observations: 'It is the name for the casting of copper with special moulds (sing. *qālib*) – like bells (sing. *jaras*), and mortars (*ḥawāwīn*), and *ramliyya* vessels from copper – such is the extent of that which can be purchased.' The caster of mortars (*ḥawāwīnī*) is allocated his own chapter in the book, though this short section provides no further technical information.[15] The entry devoted to the *sakkāb* continues,

> And the master of this craft is able to supply shops [possibly taverns, sing. *ḥānūt*] with it using existing kinds of moulds, and parts of the copper are mixed with a combination of tin, zinc, lead, and sand. Then the parts of copper, tin, zinc, and lead, generally with tin, are mixed together in the required mould.

FIG. 15.1 Beating a large copper vessel in the bazaar of the Maydan-i Shah, Isfahan (2000). Photograph Marcus Milwright.

> And this craft is currently not much in demand in Damascus, And those gainfully employed in it are few, and [that is the same situation] for the profits necessary to sustain it.[16]

This passage contains a curious mistake: the addition of sand into what would otherwise be a straightforward quaternary alloy. While sand has no place in a copper alloy (as is apparent in the following sentence where it is omitted from the list), this material had a vital role in the type of casting process (*ramliyya* or sandy) being described. Hans Wulff provides a detailed account of this mode of casting in Iran in the 1950s.[17] The mould comprised a box – constructed of wood, cast iron or, in recent times, aluminium – of two halves that could be attached together (Figs 15.2 and 15.3). The fine moulding sand would then be sieved over the pattern (which could be made from a variety of materials, though Wulff notes that brass was most common) and compacted with a ramming iron. A core might be added if a hollow vessel was to be cast, and the runners for the molten metal and the risers were cut into the sand with a spatula. The last stage prior to the closing of the mould and pouring in of the metal involved painting a mixture of water, charcoal dust and gum over the interior faces of the mould. Clearly, a great advantage of this technique was that it allowed the patterns and the moulding boxes

FIG. 15.2 Copper founder joining mould halves at Shiraz. After Wulff 1966, Fig. 12. Photograph Hans Wulff, reproduced by permission of MIT Press.

FIG. 15.3 Copper founder pouring metal into the moulds, Shiraz. After Wulff 1966, Fig. 13. Photograph Hans Wulff, reproduced by permission of MIT Press.

to be used repeatedly. The use of a hinged box can also be seen in the casting of bells in a foundry near to Bikfaya in Lebanon (Fig. 15.4). Although the intended meaning of 'lead, generally with tin' in the above passage is not entirely apparent, it may be that the pewter (perhaps involving the reuse of old vessels) was employed as a substitute for supplies of pure lead and tin.

The same casting process is indicated in the discussion of the engraver of seal rings (*ḥakkāk al-khawātim*).[18] The introduction of this chapter notes, 'It is the name for the engraving of the cast seal ring [*al-khatim al-maṣbūb*] [made] from *ramliyya* brass. Sometimes it will be from silver. And it is also engraved onto shaped ring stones [sing. *faṣṣ* or *fiṣṣ*] from mined stones like carnelian [*ḥajar al-'aqīq*], blood stone [*ḥajar al-dam*], and other than that.'

The majority of these artisans worked in the roads and sidestreets in front of Bāb Sarāyā al-'Askariyya or al-Māliyya. This location near the main army base is explained by the principal clientele for the *ḥakkāk al-khawātim* being 'mostly from the commanders and officers in the army, and other than them from the rich'. The authors extoll the 'very marvellous calligraphy' (*al-khaṭṭ al-badī' jiddan*) employed by the best engravers. The highest quality work was evidently expensive, with a fixed amount of dirhams charged

FIG. 15.4 Two-part mould for casting bells from a workshop near Bikfaya, Lebanon (2001). Photograph Marcus Milwright.

for each engraved letter (*ḥarf*). Unfortunately, the precise rates charged for the finest workmanship are not stated. The *Qāmūs* also observes that *fellahin*, members of the army (presumably of the lower ranks), and sufi mendicants bought cheaper engraved seal rings costing between 10 and 20 *para*. At the time of writing, the craft was evidently in a healthy state, providing a good living for those engaged in it.

Another decorative craft was that of the *naqqāsh*.[19] The *Qāmūs* explains that these artisans ornamented 'all kinds of copper vessels, boxes [sing. *buwāṭ*], shallow drinking cups [sing. *ṭās*], candlesticks [sing. *sham'adān*], cupboards/cases [? pl. *ṣuwānī*], lanterns (sing. *fānūs*), and other than that'. People would bring (undecorated) hammered copper items to the *naqqāsh* who would first fill the vessel with pitch (*zift*) so that it would not become bent out of shape during the engraving process. This same technique is described by Wulff in mid-twentieth-century Iran,[20] and can also be seen in the photograph taken in Bukhara (Fig. 15.5). The engraving was done using a steel chisel (*izmīl*),[21] with common designs including 'birds, roses, trees, and animals'. The account in the *Qāmūs* makes no mention of inlay, though Damascus was an important centre for this form of decoration (particularly 'Mamluk revival' metalwork) in the early years of the twentieth century. Much of the ornamented metalwork from the Syrian capital was apparently sent to Cairo for sale.[22]

FIG. 15.5 Chasing a copper bowl set into a container of pitch, Bukhara (1998). Photograph Astri Wright.

The work of the *naqqāsh* seems to have been priced by weight – rather than by time or surface area to be covered – with one *raṭl* (the Damascene *raṭl* was equal to 1.785kg) costing 'as little as' thirty *ghursh* (piastres) to engrave. In comparison, the best inlayers in Cairo in the early years of the twentieth century earned six to twelve piastres a day (ten hours of work). Those responsible for background decoration only received about two piastres.[23] According to the *Qāmūs*, 'nobody masters it [the craft] in Damascus except for the Jewish community [*ṭā'ifa min al-yahūd*]'. These artisans evidently moved from town to town according to the demand for their services. Despite the very limited desire for such engraving in Damascus itself, the craft appears to have prospered in the surrounding regions, for the authors note it is 'an important activity generating much profit'. The trade in engraved vessels was largely carried out by specialised merchants, particularly the antiques dealers (*antakjiyya*).[24]

Although it is not stated explicitly in the *Qāmūs*, one may assume that most of the vessels coated by the tinner (*samkarī*) were made of copper or copper alloys.[25] The chapter states that the master of this craft operated from a shop with a stove (*kānūn*) powered by charcoal and made use of different sorts of tin plate (*tanak*) and tools including tin snips (*miqrāḍ*) and a soldering iron (*? kāwī*). Among the objects manufactured by the *samkarī* are the jug (*ibrīq*), salt cellar (*mamlaḥa*), lantern (*fānūs*), the long-handled pot (*dawla*) for making coffee, the samovar (*sumāwara*) and the storage tin (*'ulba*). Similar types of vessels produced by the tinners of early twentieth-century Antioch are illustrated by Pierre Bazantay (Fig. 15.6). Some portion of the tin was used for soldering (*liḥām*). It was evidently a craft that generated excellent profits, but the authors of the *Qāmūs* do not accord its practitioners much social status. The chapter states, 'And it is a very widespread craft in our city. But since it is not one of the noble [*sharīf*] [crafts] most of the masters of it are Jews.'

The lantern maker (*fanārātī*) made use of a variety of materials, of which metal (principally copper) was one.[26] He took his name from the lanterns – one third of a cubit (*dhirā'*) high and half a cubit in circumference – which were said to imitate the form of a lighthouse (*fanār*).[27] The copper employed in these lanterns could be unworked/raw (*khām*) or thin sheet metal (*waraq*), and was used in combination with leather and glass. The *Qāmūs* provides some details concerning the different designs of lantern, which seem to have depended upon the placement of the candle (*sham'a*) and the types of doors. The form of this lantern perhaps follows the example from Antioch (Fig. 15.6).[28] The chapter concludes, 'And this activity is now little in demand, and it was rendered obsolete in earlier times with the arrival of lanterns [sing. *fānūs*], kerosene [*zayt al-ghāz*], and [the provision of] lighting in the roads and alleys.' Although it does not say so specifically, I presume that the *fānūs* mentioned in this passage was lit using kerosene, unlike the candle employed in the Damascene *fanār*.

FIG. 15.6 Products made by the tinners of Antioch in the early twentieth century. After Bazantay 1936, Pl. 33.

Damascus enjoyed access to resources of iron in the area of Bayt Shabab, in the mountains to the west, though these mines may not have been operating when the *Qāmūs* was being written (certainly, there is evidence of large-scale importation of iron at this time).[29] France, Austria and Germany were all also exporting manufactured iron objects to Greater Syria through the ports of Beirut and Haifa.[30] Nevertheless, the city still supported a wide range of ironworkers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. According to the *Qāmūs*, the blacksmith (*ḥaddād*) was much in demand and there were many occupied in this craft.[31] The chapter describes the working of iron, briefly noting the use of a forge (*kūr*) onto which air is blown to create the embers for heating the objects to be shaped. Among the objects produced by the *ḥaddād* were: 'tools for cultivation' (*ālāt al-ḥarth*), including shovels (sing. *mijraf*) and ploughshares (sing. *sikka*); chains (sing. *jinzir*) for horses; 'tools necessary for carpentry [*nijāra*] of dwellings and doors'; stoves (sing. *kānūn*) and cooking implements (? pl. *ṭabābīkh*); and locks (sing. *ghāl*).[32] Interestingly, the *Qāmūs* also notes that those who practised this craft were considered a 'special group' (*qism makhṣūṣ*).

The longest entry devoted to metalwork in the *Qāmūs* is on the maker of swords (*suyūfī*).[33] While the space devoted to the *suyūfī* probably reflects the elevated cultural status of swords in Islamic society and, to a lesser extent, of the artisans who

manufactured them, the chapter actually provides relatively little information about the current state of the industry in the Syrian capital (most of the text is devoted to excerpts of poetry extolling the virtues of different types of sword). Since the poetry does not bear upon the manufacturing practices of late Ottoman Damascus it will not be considered here. In the introductory remarks of this chapter, the *Qāmūs* draws a distinction between the swords produced by the *suyūfī* and 'those kinds widely available today: like the daggers [sing. *khanjar*], and the knives [sing. *sakkīn*], and the *kāmāt* (*?*), and the *bālāt* (*?*), and other than that'. The chapter continues,

> And it is among the most famous and ancient crafts; however, in these times other [things] are in demand and there is little demand for the sword.
>
> And from the types of sword, the best are the old[est]. And of these types: Yemeni, then al-Fa'liyya, then al-Hindiyya, then Sulaymāniyya, and after them al-Shāmiyya and al-Khurasāniyya.
>
> Now the most sought after are the supple European swords [*al-suyūf al-layyinat al-faranjiyya*], and they are of these kinds: German, French, English, and other than that.[34]

The list of different types of Islamic swords probably draws (either directly or indirectly) on the treatise *On Swords and their Kinds* (*al-Suyūf wa-ajnāsuhā*) composed for caliph al-Mu'tasim (r.833–42) by Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi. The designation of *al-Fa'liyya* is probably mistaken and, if Kindi is the source, should be read as al-Qala'ī (referring to a location in Yemen). Kindi's text has *al-Dimashqiyya* (Damascan) rather than *al-Shāmiyya*.[35]

The next part deals with the superior characteristics of the Yemeni swords produced during the *jāhiliyya*, noting such features as the patterning (i.e. damascening) on the surface that resembled streams (sing. *nahr*).[36] This section again seems to draw on Kindi's treatise, though it is made difficult to decipher due to errors in the vocabulary, such as *sunbul* (ear of grain) instead of *sunbuk* (extremity).[37] After returning to the qualities of European swords, which are said to possess firmness and could be brought to a high degree of sharpness as the result of excellent tempering, the *Qāmūs* mournfully remarks that, 'of this activity (*ḥarfa*) few people in Damascus subsist from making them'. Finally, the authors ennumerate a few of the many Arabic names for swords: *al-jalīl*, *al-qaḍīb*, *al-qirḍāb*, *al-dhakar*, and *al-madhkar* (*al-mudhakkar?*).[38]

On the face of it, the *Qāmūs* appears to be describing the disappearance of a traditional craft from the markets of the Syrian capital. One aspect of this may be that swords no longer possessed socio-cultural relevance for the city dwellers of Syria – the taste for ornamental or practical weapons being satisfied by the makers of guns (see below). The other aspect is the apparent superiority of European swords over the locally made examples. The observations concerning the desirable qualities of contemporary

German, French and English swords have the ring of truth; a comparison conducted in the 1920s between a seventeenth-century Persian blade and a modern European weapon found the latter to be both stronger and more flexible.[39] That Middle Eastern or Indian swords were to be found in the markets of late-Ottoman Damascus is very probable,[40] but what is less certain is whether there were 'few people' working as *suyūfīn* when the *Qāmūs* was being composed. If there were, in fact, *any* such artisans, it is notable that the *Qāmūs* discusses neither their working practices nor where they operated. Modern research has suggested that the longstanding fame of Damascus as a centre for sword manufacture is a chimera. Despite the long association between the city and the technique of 'damascening' (watering) steel, there is little textual evidence for the production of swords within Damascus. The name of the city is inscribed on only one known (unwatered) steel blade, dating to 1608–9. A British expedition of the late seventeenth century sent to recover evidence of the production of 'Damascus steel' found no trace of the industry in the Syrian capital.[41] Perhaps the authors of the *Qāmūs* were, like many Western travellers and scholars, persuaded by its enduring reputation into believing that Damascus must have been home to a once-thriving craft?

In contrast to the *suyūfī*, the maker of guns (sing. *bunduqjī*) appears to have been thriving in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[42] While the people of Damascus no longer desired swords, guns were much in demand, and the craft of the *bunduqjī* was widespread. The *Qāmūs* states, 'In summary, it is not a craft in decline, and it is now like a necessity (*ḍarūriyya*), and generates very good profits.' The chapter gives the names of some of the main categories of gun. These comprise two types of pistol (*fard* and *ṭabnaja*) and two other words, *warawīra* (?) and *jafūṭ* (?), the meanings of which I have been unable to determine. Unfortunately, no details are provided about the processes involved in the manufacture of these weapons, nor does the text state where or by whom the metal for the barrels was produced. It is possible that gun makers did not employ ingots of steel; writing in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, Massalski observed the use of old horseshoes by Persian artisans.[43]

According to the *Qāmūs*, the makers of needles (sing. *abbār*) had a special market in the city outside Bāb al-Faraj known as the Sūq al-Abbārīn.[44] They were engaged in making the range of needles required for 'sewing and diverse occupations', including packing needles (sing. *misalla*) and crochet needles (sing. *sinnāra*). At the end of the chapter, there is information concerning the dimensions and prices of needles. The *Qāmūs* states, 'they [range] in length from a *shibr* [handspan] to half a *dhirā'*. Beltmakers (*ḥazzāma*) and large numbers of *fellahin* use them for sewing belts and bulky sacks. And the value of a single one which is a *shibr* [in length] is 2.5 *para*, and bigger [ones] more.'

The relatively high price of handmade needles naturally made them vulnerable to cheaper, industrially manufactured versions. The *Qāmūs* notes that the craft was widespread

until the 'large scale arrival of foreign crafts [*al-ṣināʿāt al-ajnabiyya*] in Damascus' and that due to 'decreasing profits of it, this craft is no longer in existence'.[45] The *sūq* itself was at the time of writing occupied by storehouses for wood and other items.

The last craft involving the use of iron or steel is the locksmith (dealt with in two chapters: *ghālātī*[46] and *qafilāti*[47]). Of the latter term, the *Qāmus* notes in a short entry that in former times this was called the *qaffāl*, and that it was no longer known in Damascus. The *ghālātī* was responsible for making keys (sing. *miftaḥ*) known as *sawāqiṭ'* as well as 'kinds of iron utensil [*al-ālāt al-ḥadīdiyya*]': like locks [sing. *ghāla*], keys, and padlocks (sing. *qufl*)'. The *ghālātī* evidently supplemented his living from jobs including the mending of locks and other items, and the manufacture of iron tools. The *Qāmūs* concludes this section stating, 'it is a craft that is similar to smithing [*ḥadāda*]'. The description of the activities of the *ghālātī* suggests that his products were utilitarian in character. This may be contrasted with the long tradition in Shi'i Iran of making highly ornamented locks in steel and bronze (some of which were employed for ritual or apotropaic purposes).[48]

According to the *Qāmūs*, working in precious metals was principally the domain of two crafts, the jeweller (*ṣāʾigh*)[49] and the goldsmith (*dhahabī*).[50] The jewellers were, as they still are today, located in the district immediately south of the Umayyad mosque. The chapter states that the Christian (*naṣāra*) jewellers of this district have no equal in Damascus. Their workshops were equipped with 'a soldering iron [*? makāwī*], a crucible [*bawtaqa*], bellows [*minfākh*], floor coverings [*?* pl. *farshāyāt*], and that which is necessary for mending silver and gold'. They manufactured a wide range of items including

> kinds of seal rings [sing. *khātim*] in silver and gold with ring stone mounted on them according to the wishes of the purchaser, and they make diverse kinds of bracelet [sing. *siwār*], spoons [sing. *maʿalaqa*], elegant things [*?* pl. *ẓurūf*/coffee cups [sing. *finjān al-qahwa*],[51] tumblers [sing. *kaʾs*], belts [sing. *zunnār*], earrings [*ḥalaq*], sheaths [sing. *ghimd*] for swords and daggers, and everything that is needed by the people by the way of silver and golden trinkets.[52]

The second craft, the *dhahabī*, traded in 'plain, simple gold' as well as that which had been broken or crushed (i.e. scrap). These artisans carried out repairs as well as embellishing items with painting (*dihān*), ornamental wooden fittings and engraving (*naqsh*) that might include inscriptions. The *Qāmūs* notes that this was an ancient craft associated in Damascus with a 'special family' (*ʿāʾila makhṣūṣa*) known as the 'Bayt al-Dhahabī, descendants and branches of which were still present in the city. At the time of writing, however, there was nobody engaged in the craft in Damascus, and most of what was available in the *sūq*s was produced in the 'lands of the Franks' (*bilād al-ifranjiyya*, i.e. Europe).

The *mujarkash* (also *muzarkash*) or embellisher could be categorised as a textile worker, but is included here because his principal material was silver.[53] Although this

had once been a famous and 'exceedingly marketable activity' in Damascus which generated guaranteed profits, the *Qāmūs* states that the craft is now extinct. The *mujarkash* would embroider wires (literally veins, sing. *'irq*) of pure (*khālis*) silver into floor coverings/carpets (sing. *farsh*) to make beautiful images.[54] These floor coverings were, according to the chapter, 'necessary items for the bride and groom [*'arūsān*]'. Other than in villages, this craft was no longer cared about by Syrian consumers at the time of writing. The *Qāmūs* describes how the prices paid for ornamented carpets declined over the course of decades to a point where the activity was no longer economic. The last section of the chapter deals with differences of legal opinion concerning the work of the *mujarkash*. The majority of the Shafi'i jurists opposed this sort of lavish decoration, while the Hanafi school permitted marriage to be honoured with such a gift of silver.

For all its limitations as a source, the *Qāmūs* provides a fascinating glimpse into the activities of Damascene artisans at a crucial time of political and economic transition. While there are lacunae in the list of metalworking practices – at least if one compares it to a later, and more systematic, survey like Hans Wulff's *The Traditional Crafts of Persia* – an impressive range of metalworking crafts is discussed in the *Qāmūs*. It is also valuable for its data on the metal goods bought by the inhabitants of Damascus and in surrounding rural areas. Notable too is the evidence concerning the groups engaging in a particular craft. The *Qāmūs* claims that Jews specialised in the engraving of copper (*naqqāsh*) and tinning vessels (*samkarī*), the Christians dominated the manufacture of jewellery (*ṣā'igh*), and the defunct craft of the goldsmith had historically been the domain of the descendants of the 'Bayt al-Dhahabī'. The reference to blacksmiths constituting a 'special group' correlates with information from other regions of the Islamic world. Examples of such endogamous castes are recorded in areas such as Darfur, Arabia and Greater Syria, while Wulff records the activities of the gypsy ironworkers (Kouli) operating in rural Iran.[55] Some social stigma may be implied in these cases (as is also indicated by the example of the *samkarī*), but this is not a universal phenomenon. Serjeant's analysis of the crafts of Sana'a' indicates that it was neither unusual nor considered in any way demeaning for Sayyids (part of the Yemeni tribal aristocracy) to make their living as blacksmiths.[56]

Some of the crafts discussed in the *Qāmūs* – the *abbār*, *ḥaddād*, *naḥḥās* and the *naqqāsh* – are mentioned in medieval Arabic descriptions of Damascus and provide evidence for long-term continuity in metalworking practices (though the precise locations in the city might have changed).[57] In contrast, the manufacture of handheld firearms (*bunduqjī*) for the open market is an innovation of the Ottoman period. This craft appears to have been thriving at the end of the nineteenth century, even in the face of competition from imported European weapons.[58] The last decade of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century were clearly challenging times for the

traditional crafts of the city, however.[59] The breakup of the Ottoman empire brought with it further difficulties.[60] The lower unit cost (and sometimes higher quality) of industrially manufactured goods from Europe evidently contributed to the decline and ultimate disappearance of activities such as the *abbār*, while the maker of lanterns, the *fanāratī*, suffered due to a combination of the availability of kerosene lamps and the provision of public street lighting. The example of the *mujarkash* illustrates how the changing tastes of the urban clientele could spell the demise of a given craft (though traditional customs might persist longer in rural areas). These economic and cultural factors were not, of course, restricted to metalworking; a survey of the remaining entries in the *Qāmūs* reveals numerous examples of struggling or extinct crafts.

That said, the overall picture is not so gloomy: it is apparent that some crafts were prospering at the end of the Ottoman period. One key to survival was to supply customers with artefacts – such as cooking wares – tailored to the cultural norms of the local area. For instance, discussing the coppersmiths of the *wilāya* of Baghdad, Vital Cuinet (d.1896) notes, 'Le chaudronniers du vilayat de Bagdad sont habiles et renommés. Les principaux articles de leur fabrication sont chaudières, des marmites, etc., ainsi que divers utensils à l'usage des Arabes, tel que cafetières et *mennsef*, sorte de grands plats de cuivre dont circonférence dépasse 2 mètres; ou s'ensert pour le *pilaf*.'[61]

Exploiting such niches in the market, many traditional crafts have proved to be remarkably tenacious, operating through to the present day in the neighbourhoods of Damascus and other Middle Eastern cities.

NOTES

1 Paris 2001: 126–30, cat. nos 41, 42, 96–101, 113–21, 25–26; Allan 1986: 49–51.

2 This contract is recorded in al-Maqrizi 1853, vol. II: 112. Cited in Allan 1986: 50. See also Kana'an 2009.

3 Clavijo 1928: 87–88.

4 Howard 2003.

5 Badri 1922: 363.

6 On these earlier sources, see Elisséeff 1956.

7 On the dating and authorship of the book, see the introductory notes by Zafer al-Qasimi in Qasimi 1960, vol. I: 13–15 (French text). Also Commins 1990: 86. Since the chapters of the Arabic text of the *Qāmūs* are numbered consecutively through the two volumes, in the following references I will give the page number with the number of the entry in the alphabetic list in brackets. In cases where the translation or vowelling of an Arabic term are unclear I have marked it in the text with '(?)'.

8 Reilly 1992.

9 The terms used in the *Qāmūs* accord with modern Arabic usage, but they differ slightly from the ones found in medieval Arabic texts. For earlier designations of metals (in Arabic and Persian), see Allan 1979: 126–27, 136 (Tables 10 and 15).

10 Cuinet 1896: 67–68, 380.

11 Qasimi 1960: 40, no 9; 300, no 220; 182, no 136. Wehr 1994 gives *rīsha* for 'pen'.

12 Qasimi 1960: 5, no 37; 393, no 318; 428, no 350; 322–23, no 342. Wehr 1994 gives *ibzīm* for 'buckle'. On the *mukharris*, see Milwright 2009: 43.

13 Qasimi 1960: 479–80, no 410. Cf. Wulff 1966: 22–28.

14 Qasimi 1960: 237–38, no 159.

15 Qasimi 1960: 492–93, no 426.

16 Qasimi 1960: 237–38.

17 Wulff 1966: 18–19. Also Allan 1979: 62.

18 Qasimi 1960: 101, no 68. Cf. Wulff 1966: 37–40.

19 Qasimi 1960: 486–87, no 419. Cf. Wulff 1966: 35–37.

20 Wulff 1966: Fig. 41.

21 See Wulff 1966: Fig. 43 for diagrams of the working ends of Iranian embossing chisels. Also Allan 2000: 379–83.

22 Vernoit 1997: 238–39 and cat. no 179. See also Hildburgh 1906.

23 Hildburgh 1906: 215.

24 On the *antakjī*, see Qasimi 1960: 40–41, no 9. I analyse the activities of the *antakjī* in Milwright 2011.

25 Qasimi 1960: 239, no 162. Cf. Wulff 1966: 31; Hildburgh 1906: 216.

26 Qasimi 1960: 343, no 265.

27 A Syrian cubit equals 0.68m.

28 On metalworking in the city, see Bazantay 1936: 37–38.

29 Allan 2000: 77–78; Cuinet 1896: 424.

30 Cuinet 1896: 68; Ismail 1982, vol. VI: 333, 336, 375, 380, 384.

31 Qasimi 1960: 93–94, no 58. Cf. Wulff 1966: 48–54.

32 For illustrations of ploughshares, spades and hoes made by Iranian blacksmiths, see Wulff 1966: Figs 72–74.

33 Qasimi 1960: 243–46, no 169.

34 Qasimi 1960: 243.

35 See Hoyland 2006: 20–21, 32–33, 59–82.

36 Qasimi 1960: 244.

37 Hoyland 2006: 27–28 for the relevant passage in Arabic and English translation.

38 Qasimi 1960: 244. The meanings of some of these terms have been reviewed in the light of their appearance in Arabic poetry. See Hoyland 2006: 101–4 (*al-dhakar* and *al-mudhakkar*), 125–28 (*qaḍīb*), 130–31 (*qirḍab*). *Al-jalīl* may be translated as magnificent or sublime.

39 Zschokke cited in Allan 1979: 78.

40 Cf. Qasimi 1960: 40, no 9.

41 Allan 2000: 76–79. Also Hoyland 2006: 81–82, n. 108.

42 Qasimi 1960: 49, no 16.

43 Massalski cited in Allan 2000: 165–66. For examples of nineteenth-century pistols and rifles made in the Middle East, see Elgood 1995: Figs 1, 2, 6, 14–24, 29–31; Allan 2000: 168–71, Fig. 21 and A.15.

44 Qasimi 1960: 215, no 142.

45 This description brings to mind Adam Smith's famous discussion of the traditional practices involved in the manufacture of pins in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Book 1, Chapter 1 (1776), 'Of the division of labour'. I am grateful to Jan Just Witkam for bringing this to my attention.

46 Qasimi 1960: 326, no 245.

47 Qasimi 1960: 361, no 286.

48 On the locks of Iran, see Allan and Gilmour 2000: 402–20. Also Wulff 1966: 65–72.

49 Qasimi 1960: 264–65, no 188. Cf. Cuinet 1890–1900, vol. III: 67 (describing the jewellers of Baghdad).

50 Qasimi 1960: 151, no 110.

51 Cf. Establet 2001: 147–49.

52 Qasimi 1960: 264.

53 Qasimi 1960: 419–20, no 340.

54 On the drawing out of silver and gold wire and making of thread with precious metal in Iran, see Wulff 1966: 42–47.

55 Johns 1998: 73; Wulff 1966: 49–50.

56 Serjeant 1980: 131–32.

57 Elisséeff 1956: 66 (no 1: *abbarīn*), 68, no 12: *ḥaddādīn*; 69, no 22: *naḥḥāsīn*; 70, no 24: *naqqāshīn*). Other sites relating to metalwork are: 75 (no 56: *sūq al-qanādīl*, lamp market), and 76, no 61: *masbak al-ḥadīd*, iron foundry. Metalworking crafts found in earlier sources but not, as far as I can tell, discussed in the *Qāmūs* are: 70, no 34: *ṣaffārīn*, brass workers, and 70, no 35: *sakākīniyyīn*, cutlers. On the cutlers of Antioch, see Bazantay 1936: 37–38 and Pl. 32.

58 On the importation of European rifles and pistols to the Middle East, see Elgood 1995: 27–29, 52–65; Allan 2000: 170–72.

59 Commins 1990: 10–12; Reilly 1992. Cf. Gerber 1985: 55–81; Milwright 2008: 135–41; Milwright 2009: 39–40, 45–48.

60 The industries and crafts of Syria suffered due to the imposition by neighbouring states of high tariffs on imported goods. See Naval Intelligence Division 1944: 276–77.

61 Cuinet 1890, vol. III: 67. Also Naval Intelligence Division 1944: 280.

PART 5

THE ISLAMIC WEST

16

A BRONZE PILLAR LAMPSTAND FROM PETRALIA SOTTANA, SICILY

JEREMY JOHNS

In the church of Santa Maria Assunta in the town of Petralia Sottana, in the Madonie mountains of central Sicily, a dramatic act of sacred theatre – *'A Caduta d'u Tiluni* – marks the end of the Easter vigil.[1] At midnight, the sombre curtain that throughout Lent has hung across the central apse is dropped to the pavement to reveal the image of Christ Triumphant above an altar brightly decorated with baskets of sprouting wheat and gaudy artificial flowers. To the left and in the foreground stands the Paschal Candle, symbolising the 'Light of Christ'. Hidden as it is by the wheat and flowers, it is difficult to make out that the candle is held in a massive bronze lampstand decorated with Arabic inscriptions that was made more than eight hundred years ago by craftsmen trained in the Islamic tradition of metalworking (Fig. 16.1). An iron cylinder, resembling nothing so much as an old rusty can, is screwed onto the truncated top of the lampstand to hold the candle. During the service, the flame guttering in the draughty church copiously drips wax over the ancient bronze. Once it has fulfilled its liturgical role, before the lampstand is locked away for another year, the dribbles of wax are scraped off with a blunt knife and the residue is removed by dunking in a cauldron of boiling water. Over the years, such perfunctory treatment has rendered the lampstand and its decoration difficult to read clearly and describe with confidence, and so there have been published no more than the most cursory accounts of what may be the only significant and substantial piece of metalwork to survive from the Islamic period in Sicily.[2] Nor does what follows pretend to be the definitive study of the lampstand; that must await the expert cleaning and restoration that it so desperately requires.

FIG. 16.1 Petralia lampstand with the modern candle-holder attached. © J. Johns.

The lampstand is composed of five main elements: the iron candle-holder (1) is attached by an iron peg with a screw-thread that is inserted into the hexagonal base of the original spiked finial or pricket (2) which has been truncated, perhaps by accidental breakage, perhaps deliberately to accommodate the modern candle-holder. The pricket develops from a small baluster (3) held between a capital and a base, both of which are also hexagonal. To the corners of the capital are attached the tails of six stylised birds which project radially outwards and end in large heads with pronounced hooked beaks (Fig. 16.2). The legs of the birds extend vertically downwards to meet the lion-heads that project from the six corners of the base of the small baluster. All six lion-heads survive, but only four of the birds, one of which has lost its beak; the scars where the two missing birds once joined the corners of the capital are still clearly visible. The base of the small baluster coincides approximately with the top of the hollow hexagonal pillar (4). Each of the six sides of the pillar is pierced with foliate, geometric and epigraphic designs in openwork. The pillar sits upon a thin hexagonal plate with scalloped sides that covers the circular rim of (5) the large baluster-shaped base with a flaring foot.

The iron candle-holder and the peg onto which it screws are relatively modern additions, although neither is machine-tooled and both seem to be the work of a local blacksmith, perhaps indicating that they date from the eighteenth or nineteenth century. The iron peg is fixed into the truncated hexagonal cone that is all that remains of what must originally have been the base of a high spiked pricket (Figs 16.2 and 16.3); presumably this was once furnished with a boss and an openwork tray as are the comparanda discussed below. The decoration of the sides of the base of the pricket is badly scratched

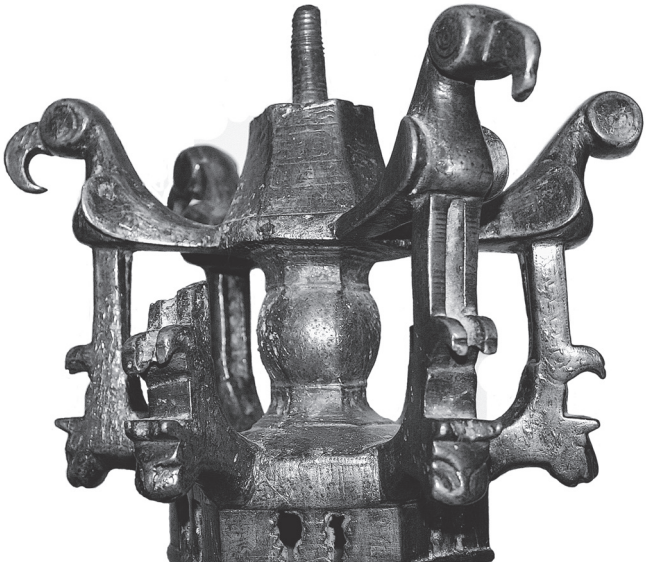

FIG. 16.2 Petralia lampstand: detail of the projecting birds and lion-heads. © J. Johns.

and heavily obscured by accumulated dirt and wax, but seems to consist of foliate and scrollwork decoration arranged in four horizontal bands and traced out with lines that were first punched and then incised (Fig. 16.3); the decoration of each of the six sides appears to be different. The sides of the capital of the small baluster, between the tails of the birds, are decorated with punched and incised designs, now in a very bad condition (Fig. 16.2).

The birds themselves are heavily decorated with punched and incised lines emphasising features such as the eyes and nostrils, wings, plumage on the neck, back and breast, and legs (Fig. 16.2). The facial features of the lion-heads are modelled with the prominent V-shaped brows, bulbous nose and staring pop-eyes reminiscent of a type of lion that derives from Fatimid Egypt and reappears in various media in Norman Sicily, including the painted ceilings of the Cappella Palatina.[3] The sides of the lion-heads are decorated with punched and incised lines similar to those on the birds.

The hollow hexagonal pillar measures 31.5cm high and approximately 13.6cm across, with sides approximately 6.8cm wide. Each side of the column is divided by horizontal convex mouldings into six bands of decoration, from top to bottom as follows: (i) a horizontal band (2.7cm high) pierced by a central stepped merlon, flanked with delicate punched and incised palmette scrolls; (ii) a horizontal band (3.4cm high) pierced by a central palmette, flanked with delicate incised palmette scrolls; (iii) a horizontal band (1.9cm high) with punched and incised decoration that is extremely difficult to read but that seems to include cursive script (Fig. 16.4); (iv) a vertical band (15.5cm high) with a pierced openwork Kufic inscription giving a standard augural formula (Fig. 16.6), discussed below; (v) a horizontal band (1.5cm high) with punched

FIG. 16.3 Petralia lampstand: detail of decoration on the base of the pricket. © J. Johns.

and incised decoration similar to (iii); and (vi) a horizontal band (2.9cm high) with a central pierced stellate ornament (Fig. 16.1).

The pillar rests upon a thin hexagonal plate, with a diameter of 17.7cm and scalloped sides measuring 10cm, which sits upon the circular rim of the large baluster-shaped base (Fig. 16.1). The baluster is 32.5cm high with a cylindrical central column and a foot that flares out to form a shallow truncated cone (6cm high, 28.2cm in diameter). The top of the column is less heavily flared and its rim (diameter 17cm) supports the base plate of the hexagonal pillar. The cylindrical column is banded by two rounded mouldings between which is a pronounced boss in the form of a flattened sphere made up of six wedges arranged diagonally to give a spiral effect (Fig. 16.5). The wedges are convex and pierced by elliptical decorative panels with identical geometrical designs; to either side of the openwork panels are bands of elaborate punched and incised foliate decoration, now extremely difficult to read. Around the neck of the column, above the moulding, is a band of guilloche interlace; below the moulding are traces of a horizontal band of decoration, possibly epigraphic. The foot seems to be undecorated, save for a band of punching on the moulding.

The pricket, small baluster with projecting birds and lions, and hollow hexagonal pillar were all cast in one. The base plate of the pillar is soldered to the rim of the baluster.

FIG. 16.4 Petralia lampstand: detail of the decoration on the base of the upper baluster and on the upper three bands (i–iii) of the hexagonal pillar. © J. Johns.

The baluster seems to have been cast in one, but the flaring foot seems subsequently to have separated (or to have threatened to separate) from the boss, which is heavily damaged as if from a fall. On the exterior, three small copper-alloy plates have been attached with rivets or bolts to the base of the boss and top of the foot in order to reinforce the joint between the two (Figs 16.1 and 16.5). Internally, three iron strips have been added within the cavity of the baluster and are attached to the column of the baluster above the boss, and to the base of the foot.[4]

While the pricket, the upper baluster with projecting birds and lions, and the hollow hexagonal pillar all belong together and, indeed, were cast as one, the large baluster-shaped base of the lampstand is not so obviously part of the original composition. On the one hand, the decoration of the baluster, especially the openwork panels on the boss, is in the same style as the pierced decoration of the pillar. This may be significant because lampstands with pierced decoration on the pillar regularly have bases decorated with similar openwork motifs.[5] On the other hand, the disproportionate height and width of the baluster make it appear awkward and heavy compared to the relatively delicate, graceful and harmonious proportions of most Islamic pillar lampstands of this period, which typically rest upon a base in the form of a flattened half-dome supported by three projecting feet.[6] Indeed, Umberto Scerrato believed that the upper part of the Petralia

FIG. 16.5 Petralia lampstand: detail of the baluster base. © J. Johns.

lampstand was 'in origine montato su una base a cupola schiacciata provvista di tre piedi', and that 'la parte inferiore … con tutta probabilità, seppure nello stesso stile del fusto, non era a esso originariamente pertinente date le diverse proporzioni e può provenire da un altro simile portalampade'.[7] Although the last phrase suggests that he may have been aware of the existence of lampstands with baluster-shaped bases, in 1979 Scerrato would not have known of complete examples of that type, which did not appear on the market until after 1984. He would therefore have searched in vain for good comparanda for the Petralia lampstand with its baluster-shaped base, and thus reasonably concluded that the pillar was more likely to have originally rested upon a base in the form of a flattened half-dome with three feet, a well-attested form with which he was familiar from the Iranian world and especially from his extensive work at Ghazni.[8]

However, Scerrato may not have examined the Petralia lampstand in person. Had he done so, he would surely have commented upon its most striking feature – its exceptional size. He did not publish its dimensions, and there is no scale in the figure that accompanies his account of the object. Moreover, although Scerrato remarked that 'l'interesse principale [of the lampstand] risiede nelle iscrizioni eseguite a traforo' on its pillar, he did not give a reading of those inscriptions but merely noted that they are 'di tipo augurale, sebbene impieghino una formula inconsueta che secondo alcuni avrebbe chiari riferimenti cristiani'. This is a curious phrase, which entertains the possibility that the inscriptions contain a Christian reference, disguises the identity of the 'alcuni' who believe that it did, and carefully avoids giving a reading and interpretation of the inscription. It was not until 1991–92 that my old friend Monsignor Benedetto Rocco confessed in print that he himself was Scerrato's source: 'In questo "alcuni",' he wrote, 'c'è un'allusione ad un colloquio avuto dallo studioso [Scerrato] con lo scrivente, in

anni quando studiavo l'epigrafe e ritenevo di averne trovato il senso'.[9] My point is that had Scerrato himself examined the inscriptions he would have immediately seen that the text, far from being unusual, is a banal augural formula that carries absolutely no Christian reference.

Since 1984, it has been recognised that the Petralia lampstand is related morphologically to the distinct group of pillar lampstands from al-Andalus that Juan Zozaya has called *candelabros arquitectónicos* because the form of the pillar evokes architecture.[10] The group is characterised by projecting zoomorphic ornament, pillars in the form of an open cage with slender columns, and large baluster-shaped bases. Two complete or nearly complete examples of this type are known. One, in the David Collection, has a tall pricket complete with an openwork tray.[11] The pillar is a hexagonal open cage with a domed openwork top supported by six slender columns; six small birds project from the corners of the dome. The columns rest upon a thin hexagonal plate with scalloped sides which sits upon the circular top of the large baluster-shaped base. The upper half of the spheroid boss of the baluster bears an inscription repeating the word *baraka* (blessing) in Kufic script, punched and chased. The baluster has a wide flaring foot.

The upper part – the pricket and pillar – of the Copenhagen lampstand is remarkably similar to the well-known lampstand that was excavated in the nineteenth century at Elvira (ancient Illiberis, Ar. Madinat Ilbira) and now in the Museo Arqueológico y Etnológico in Granada.[12] It too has a hexagonal pillar with domical top from which project six small birds. The pillar is again an open cage, but in this case formed of 12 columns. The pillar rests upon a thin hexagonal plate which was once thought to be the base of the complete lampstand. More recently, after the Copenhagen example came to light, it has been realised that the Elvira lampstand must also originally have had a similar baluster base.[13] It is intriguing that just such a base, also from Madinat Ilbira, with rather crude incised decoration, is preserved in the same museum.[14]

The other complete example, in the Aga Khan Museum, has a tall pricket which develops from a truncated pyramid.[15] Four stylised birds are attached by their tails to the corners of the base of the pyramid, and their feet extend downwards to rest on the heads of smaller birds which project from the domed openwork top of the central pillar. The quadrilateral pillar is again an open cage, but is here formed by eight slender columns. The columns rest upon a thin square plate that covers the circular mouth of a large baluster with a flaring foot. The boss of the baluster again bears an inscription repeating the word *baraka*.

At least six other fragments of lampstands with projecting zoomorphic ornament and pillars in the form of an open cage belong to the same general group. In three examples, as in the complete lampstand in Toronto, the pillar is quadrilateral and

the feet of the upper projecting birds rest upon the heads of the smaller birds below: Menorca, Malbuger Vell, now in a private collection;[16] Santarém (Portugal), Museu Arqueológico;[17] Valencia, Museo de Bellas Artes San Pío V.[18] The remaining three fragments also have quadrilateral pillars, but the bodies of the birds project horizontally and unsupported, as in the Elvira and David Collection lampstands: one from Almería, now in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid;[19] another from Cerro Muriano, near Córdoba, and now in a private collection;[20] and the third in the Victoria and Albert Museum.[21] These six fragments are all now missing their bases but it is probable that all originally had the same large baluster-shaped base that characterises the complete examples in Copenhagen and Toronto. Indeed, baluster-shaped bases that have become separated from their upper parts – presumably lampstands – are found in several Spanish museums. In addition to the base from Elvira, an example in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid is inscribed on the top of the boss with the word *baraka*,[22] as are the examples in Copenhagen and Toronto. A third base, in the Museo de Bellas Artes San Pío V in Valencia, is decorated on the boss with rampant lions in roundels and on the base with a foliate pattern.[23] It is possible that a systematic search of Iberian and western Mediterranean collections aimed at locating such bases would discover others hitherto classified as vases or open vessels.

This group of lampstands – Zozaya's *candelabros arquitectónicos* – thus comprises as many as a dozen objects. While the Petralia lampstand, with its projecting zoomorphic ornament, openwork pillar and baluster base, is clearly closely related morphologically to this group, it differs in its great size, in the proportion of pillar to base, in the form and decoration of the pillar, and in the use of openwork decoration on the baluster.

The Petralia lampstand is indeed exceptionally large and heavy. It measures 79.5cm from the top of the heads of the birds to the base, not counting the pricket that would once have added at least another 15 or 20cm to the total height. The diameter of the base is 28.2cm, and the span from the outermost extremity of the beak of one bird to that of the bird opposite is 29cm. It was not possible to weigh the object, but I estimate it to be in the range of 10kg. With a reconstructed original height little short of one metre, this is by far the tallest of the pillar lampstands known from the medieval Islamic world. The other two complete lampstands of a similar type measure 50.5cm (Copenhagen) and 52.5cm (Toronto) from the point of the pricket to the base, so that the Petralia lampstand may have been almost twice as tall. The Elvira lampstand, which measures 55.3cm without its base, would originally have reached approximately 75cm.

As Scerrato observed, the baluster base of the Petralia lampstand is disproportionately large. The approximate proportion of the original height of the pillar to that of the base must have been in the order of 7:3, whereas in the complete examples it is respectively

11:4 (Copenhagen) and 5:2 (Toronto). But it does not necessarily follow that the baluster base of the Petralia lampstand is a later addition. The open cages, slender columns and small projecting birds of the *candelabros arquitectónicos* all tend to minimise the weight of the upper pillar. In contrast, the pillar of the Petralia lampstand, with its solid sides pierced only by openwork decoration and its chunky zoomorphic ornament, is far heavier and therefore requires a proportionately larger base to keep the lampstand stable and upright. While this does not prove that the present baluster is original, it does furnish a plausible explanation for its disproportionate size. The alternative – that a baluster from a lampstand with similar decoration was at some stage substituted for the original base – is certainly possible, not least because such a mix-and-match attitude to composite artefacts, including lampstands, is amply demonstrated by metalworkers' hoards such as those from Denia, Caesarea and Tiberias;[24] but it would require us to believe in the existence of a lampstand approximately 114cm high using the proportions of 5:2, even larger than the massive example in Petralia. That elements from what would be the two largest lampstands known from the Islamic world should both have ended up in Petralia seems to me so unlikely as to rule out this alternative.

The form and decoration of the pillar of the Petralia lampstand also sets it apart from the *candelabros arquitectónicos*. While pillars with openwork decoration of this type are all but unknown in the Islamic Mediterranean, they are common in lampstands from northeast Iran. However, the range and combination of motifs employed on the pillar of the Petralia lampstand are not attested in published examples from the Iranian world. I dare say that none of the Iranian pillar lampstands have the projecting zoomorphic decoration characteristic of the Andalusi *candelabros arquitectónicos*, and that also distinguishes the Petralia lampstand. In particular, the manner in which the feet of an upper tier of projecting birds are supported by the heads of a lower tier (Menorca, Santarem, Toronto, Valencia), forming pronounced loops, links this group to the Petralia lampstand. However, the heavy modelling and extreme stylisation of the birds on our lampstand distinguish them from those on the *candelabros arquitectónicos*, and only in Petralia do lion-heads form the lower tier of projecting ornament.

But the Petralia birds are not quite alone. In the museum of the Qal'a Bani Hammad in Algeria is displayed a single bronze bird (4.2cm high and 2.5cm long) that apparently was once attached by its tail and legs to a larger object, almost certainly a lampstand.[25] The form, modelling and decoration of this little bird are all remarkably close to the much larger birds (12cm high including the legs) on the Petralia lampstand. At the same time, as several scholars have noted, the bronze ornaments from the Qal'a Bani Hammad, including birds similar if not identical to this, find close parallels in Seljuk art.[26]

The stepped merlon and foliate motif beneath it on the top of each of the six sides of the pillar (Figs 16.1 and 16.4) recall the Elvira lampstand, which has stepped merlons

projecting vertically from the corners of the top of the pillar, alternating with palmettes projecting from the middle of each side. Stepped merlons also adorn the top of the pillar of the lampstand from Cerro Muriano. However, these are the only elements on the Petralia lampstand that may refer to architecture.

The most conspicuous element of the decoration of the pillar of the Petralia lampstand are the pierced openwork inscriptions (Fig. 16.6). Such inscriptions are attested, albeit rarely, on the openwork pillars of lampstands from northeast Iran,[27] but I am aware of no other examples that may have been made in the Islamic Mediterranean. Each of the six sides bears the same inscription:

الغبطة واليمن الكـ...

al-ghibṭa wa-l-yumn al-k[āmila?] (happiness and [perfect?] bliss) – which runs vertically from top to bottom with the tops of the letters on the left of each panel. The script is foliated Kufic, although most of the detail of the decoration has been scraped and polished away. The letter forms bear comparison with those of late-eleventh- and early-twelfth-century inscriptions from Ifriqiya.[28] The first word – *al-ghibṭa* – is clearly written and well-spaced: the *alif-lam* are linked by a horizontal bar; the *'ayn* has pronounced 'horns' and foliation; the *ta'* has a 'swan's-neck' and foliation; and the *ta' marbuta* is elongated. The *waw* is topped by what seems to be a circular foliate ornament. Already in the second word – *al-yumn* – the artist began to run out of space and the letters are cramped: the *alif-lam* are linked by a horizontal bar; the *ya'* is pressed hard against the *mim*; the *nun* sprouts directly from the *mim* and its tail probably curls backwards to form a foliated swan's-neck above the *mim*. The third word is incomplete: the *alif-lam* are again linked by a horizontal bar, and the final letter, with which the text abruptly ends, is probably a *kaf*, with foliation above the loop of the letter – presumably all that remains of the adjective *al-kāmila* (perfect).

The *candelabros arquitectónicos* have been seen as a continuation and transformation of a Late Antique and early Byzantine tradition of metal objects reproducing architectural forms. They have been variously dated – on grounds that do not bear too much scrutiny at the two extremes – from as early as the ninth century to as late as the twelfth, from the Emirate to the Taifas. On firmer ground, they seem to be strictly confined to al-Andalus. Although the Petralia lampstand shares with this group the projecting zoomorphic ornament, the baluster base, augural inscriptions and some decorative motifs, the form of the pillar is completely different and makes almost no reference to architecture; in this respect, it clearly should not be considered as belonging to the group from al-Andalus. At the same time, the openwork pillar of the Petralia lampstand and the openwork decoration on the boss of the baluster reflect the

FIG. 16.6 Petralia lampstand: detail of the pierced inscription of the hexagonal pillar. © J. Johns.

metalworking traditions of northeast Iran, which are almost totally absent from the *candelabros arquitectónicos*. Lampstands with openwork pillars which best represent that Iranian tradition are generally dated to the tenth to twelfth centuries, so that there is some overlap between the dates assigned to the two groups. All this suggests that the Petralia lampstand may be a hybrid, the product of the confluence of two different traditions of Islamic metalwork. As to its date, both the eastern influence and the remarkably close parallel with the little bird from the Qal'a Bani Hammad suggest that it should belong to the eleventh or possibly the first half of the twelfth century. The place of manufacture is more problematic, and all that can be said with confidence is that the strong links between the Petralia lampstand and the particularly Andalusi *candelabros arquitectónicos* indicate that it is most likely to have been made in the western Mediterranean. Al-Andalus, North Africa and Sicily are all possible candidates. It may be significant that, in this region, the best evidence for the presence of northeastern Iranian craftsmen comes from Zīrid Ifrīqīya in the last decade of the eleventh century, when floriated scripts, both cursive and Kufic, first appear on the inscriptions associated with Khurasani immigrants.[29] For that reason, I am inclined tentatively to attribute the Petralia lampstand to Ifriqiya in the late eleventh or early twelfth century.

THE LAMPSTAND IN ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Nothing is known of how or even when the lampstand first came to Petralia, but it is worth concluding with a few remarks about the possible historical context. Petralia Sottana lies a little more than 100km east of Palermo and some 60km south of the coastal city of Cefalù, in the heart of the Madonie, the outcrop of the Apennine Mountains that dominates the centre of the north of the island. Petralia Sottana ('Lower Petralia') is approximately 2km from, and some 150m beneath Petralia Soprana ('Upper Petralia'). While the higher of the two Petralias is attested as an urban centre from the mid-third century BC when, as Petra, it was taken under Roman rule,[30] Petralia Sottana first appears in written records only during the thirteenth century AD. It is therefore almost certainly Soprana that is described by the geographer al-Muqaddasi (c.985) as Baṭraliya, a walled town containing a castle with a church.[31] As late as the middle of the twelfth century, al-Idrisi still knew of only one Baṭraliya: 'Petralia is a noble fortress and a lofty stronghold. Its farmlands are extensive and highly productive. In it are a castle and a market which is just like the markets of great cities.'[32] However, during the last quarter of the thirteenth century, the two Petralias are clearly distinguished from each other in fiscal records: the Angevin tax of 1277 assessed Petralia Superior at 30 hearths contributing 6 *tarì*, and Petralia Inferior at 25 hearths and 5 *tarì*, while the Aragonese *fodro* of 1283 recorded Superior at 300 hearths and 60 *tarì*, and Inferior at 155 hearths and 31 *tarì*.[33] From these statistics it would appear that Petralia Sottana is likely to have first been distinguished from Soprana only in the late twelfth or thirteenth century, and to have remained the smaller and less important of the two towns throughout the thirteenth century.

The same thirteenth-century fiscal records suggest that the two Petralias were much poorer and less populous than the neighbouring towns of Caltavuturo and Polizzi, which had far richer and more fertile territories.[34] Petralia's importance under Muslim and then Norman rule derived principally from its commanding position on the road that ran cross-country from Palermo to Catania at the point where a road branched southwards towards Enna and the Val di Noto. Thus, Petralia played an important strategic role in the early years of the Norman conquest of Sicily. In 1061, Count Roger I joined the Muslim *qa'id* Ibn al-Thumna in the siege of Petralia: 'the citizens, part Christians and part Muslims, took a common decision to make peace with the count and surrendered to him the castle'.[35] In the following year, the death of Ibn al-Thumna compelled Roger to abandon Petralia and withdraw to Messina, and it was only four years later that Roger was able to build a strong castle outside the walls of Petralia which, the chronicler claims, enabled him to control the greater part of Sicily.[36]

Under Norman rule, the district of Petralia was maintained within the de Hauteville demesne until perhaps as late as the fall of the dynasty, and was administered by a succession of royal officials including the *qa'id* Maymun (before 1142),[37] the *strategot* Nicolaus (1159),[38] and the bailiff Pipus (1177).[39] Within the district, lands were also held by both lay and ecclesiastical feudatories, including King Roger's own son, Roger Duke of Apulia, who was granted all or part of the district of Petralia in or before 1142,[40] and presumably held it until his death in 1148. Other Latin landholders and officials in the district include: John of Aversa, who appears together with Hugh of Capua and Natale, both canons of Petralia (1159);[41] the royal justiciar William Avenel of Petralia from a venerable Sicilian-Norman family (1166);[42] William de Mouritzē, who appears alongside the Greek Euphemios of Traina, 'both from Petralia' and both master foresters and catepans (local administrators) of the lands of the royal demesne (1168);[43] and Bonoinfante and the notary Samson, both described as 'de Petralia' (1191).[44]

In 1131, King Roger actively encouraged the establishment of the Latin church in the district by granting extensive lands and many villeins to the Benedictine monastery of St Michael Archangel, originally founded by Raoul de Beauvais, a baron of Roger I, as a daughter house of the influential mainland monastery of the Holy Trinity at Cava.[45] The church of St Peter at Petralia seems to have been absorbed by St Michael's in the mid-twelfth century.[46] St Mary's of Polizzi, also known as 'de Latina', 'de Eremitis' and 'de' or 'la Gadera' (from the Arabic *ghadir*, lake), was founded before 1150 as a grange of St Mary of the Latins in Jerusalem subject to the prior of St Philip's at Agira, and lay within the district of Petralia, where it was granted lands from the royal demesne adjacent to the monastery in 1164.[47] Roger Duke of Apulia founded – presumably while he held Petralia – the priory of the Prémonstratensian canons of St George of Gratteri, which was granted extensive lands in the district of Petralia by William I in 1155.[48] There must also have been Latin churches in the town and castle of Petralia, but no trace of structures earlier than the fourteenth century now survives, although earlier roots are popularly claimed for several of the existing churches.

At the same time, Petralia had a significant Greek community throughout the twelfth century, and the fact that most of the surviving documents relating to the district were originally composed in Greek may indicate that Greek-speakers constituted the majority of the local population. There are traces of a Greek clergy,[49] and the Greek monastery of St Cosmas tou Gōnátou lay a few kilometres to the north of the town.[50]

The activities of local Greek notaries can be followed. The Christian villeins granted by King Roger to St Michael Archangel in 1131 all bear Greek or Arabic names, and presumably represent the Greek Christian peasantry.[51] Petralia also had a significant population of Muslims throughout the twelfth century, who appear both as jurors in boundary inquests, and as villeins.[52]

In short, the lampstand belongs to the age in which Petralia was a strategically important regional town, a royal castle and centre of Latin settlement and of the Latin church, but at the heart of a poor, sparsely populated district that remained predominantly Greek Christian and Muslim. Al-Idrisi's claim that Petralia was prosperous, with fertile arable lands, plentiful pasture and a thriving market, may have been true for the mid-twelfth century but, if so, the town must have declined steeply over the next century. Petralia was connected to other, bigger centres by one of the secondary internal roads of the island. Although distant from Palermo, Petralia was by no means isolated from the capital, and the de Hauteville and their leading barons maintained an interest in the town and its territory throughout the twelfth century. Although there is no reason to think that the lampstand was commissioned by a royal or noble patron – indeed, the anonymous and impersonal nature of its augural inscriptions indicate that it was not – it is tempting to believe that it must have arrived in Petralia as a gift from the king, one of his family, or one of his barons. However, this would have been before the emergence of Petralia Sottana as a centre in its own right, and well before the foundation of Santa Maria Assunta.[53] It therefore seems probable that the lampstand was originally presented to one of the older churches in or around Petralia, whence it eventually made its way to its present home.

The community of Petralia Sottana is rightly proud that it maintains to this day its traditional celebrations during Holy Week. The solemn penitential procession on Good Friday and the joyous procession on Easter Sunday, culminating in 'U 'Ncuontru between the effigies of Christ and his Mother, seem to involve the whole town and not just the confraternities and religious corporations that take the leading role in these processions. But, in Santa Maria Assunta, it is now 'A Caduta d'u Tiluni that marks the end of the Easter Vigil and the lighting of the Paschal Candle no longer plays a central role in the ceremony. Neither the church nor the citizens of Petralia wish to release the lampstand from the service that it has performed for generations and possibly for centuries, but the cumulative effect of the damage done annually to this unique treasure has already erased much of its decoration and now threatens to destroy what little remains. Nor is it right to embarrass the parish priest of Santa Maria with the heavy responsibility of ensuring the safety and security of so valuable an artefact. A facsimile of the lampstand should be made for liturgical use, and the original should first be properly conserved and then transferred to the Museo Civico in Petralia Sottana which, since 2008, boasts a new archaeological section where the lampstand could be displayed to citizens and tourists alike, and would rightly take pride of place as a unique witness to Petralia's rich and fascinating history.

NOTES

1 I am immensely grateful to Don Santo Scileppi, the *arciprete parroco* of Santa Maria Assunta in Petralia Sottana, for kindly permitting me to study and photograph the lampstand in February 2010. I was introduced to him – as long ago as I was to Sicily itself – by my dear friend Renata Pucci di Benisichi, author of two charming collections of reminiscences of Petralia Sottana (Pucci di Benisichi 1996 and 2000).

2 Bellafiore 1975: 22 and 69, Fig. 12; Scerrato 1979: 543–44, Fig. 243; Bellafiore 1990: Fig. 4; Rocco 1991–92: 7–21.

3 Johns 2010, Schede, no 374, pp. 492–94.

4 A similar technique seems to be used to strengthen the joint between the upper part and the baluster base of the lampstand in the David Collection (see below), but this needs verification.

5 Melikian-Chirvani 1982: 54.

6 Wiet 1984: no 8483, Pl. XXV; Jenkins 1983: 66; Lester et al. 1999: 238–39, Fig. 3a; von Folsach 2001: no 460, 299. More than ten lampstands from the Tiberias hoard have a similar form: see Khamis and Amir 1999; Ponting 2008; Hirschfeld and Gutfeld 2008: xiv–xv, Pls IIA–IIIC. The detailed study of the hoard by Elias Khamis is forthcoming as Volume II of this report, but see also the article by Khamis in this volume. Two pillar lampstands were sold at Christie's sale 7871 on the 5 October 2010, one attributed to tenth-century Egypt (lot 130), the other – with elaborate openwork decoration, including Kufic inscriptions – to northeastern Iran in the twelfth century (lot 11). For examples from al-Andalus: Gómez-Moreno 1951: 326, Figs 387, 390 (c); Zozaya 1967: 133–54. Three examples from the Denia hoard, attributed to Fatimid Egypt, eleventh century, are exhibited in the Museo Arqueológico de Alicante: see Azuar Ruiz 1989: 51–55. Azuar Ruiz's promised study of the 'Bronces islámicos de Denia' is still awaited.

7 Scerrato 1979: 543–44.

8 Scerrato 1961: Pl. LXI.

9 Rocco 1991–92: 11. I originally chose to contribute a study of this object to James's Festschrift under the misapprehension that it was a Christian object made in the Islamic tradition of metalworking. Alas, Rocco's account of the lampstand as a Paschal candlestick proved to depend upon his misreading of the augural inscription as *al-ghibṭa wa-ālām* [*sic!*] *al-malik*, translated as 'Le Passioni del Re. E la Beatudine', and interpreted as a reference to the passion of Christ. Further, as is shown by the following discussion of Islamic lampstands of similar type, Rocco's elaborate symbolic interpretation of the form and decoration of the lampstand is also baseless.

10 See especially Zozaya 2011: 16–19, where he argues that they carry a precise reference to the Heavenly Jerusalem.

11 Copenhagen, The C.L. David Collection of Islamic Art, inv. no 11/1987, purchased at auction at Sotheby's in 1984 (lot 165); attributed to al-Andalus, tenth century; height

50.5cm: see von Folsach 2001: 286, no 455. The object is also illustrated online at http://www.davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/dynasties/spain.

12 Granada, Museo Arqueológico y Etnológico, inv. nos 614–15; attributed to al-Andalus, tenth century; height 55.3cm, base diameter 4.8cm: see Zozaya 1967: passim and lam. Ie–g; Zozaya 1995b: no 35, 230–31; Viguera Molins et al. 2001, vol. 2: 199; Zozaya 2011: 16–17 et passim, Figs 17, 18, 27.

13 See Zozaya 2011: Fig. 18 for a photographic reconstruction of the Elvira lampstand upon a baluster base.

14 Granada, Museo Arqueológico y Etnológico, inv. 3.364; height 20cm: Zozaya 1967: 149–50, Fig. 8a, lam. IIIe–f and IVa.

15 Toronto, Aga Khan Museum, inv. no AKM00593; attributed to al-Andalus, tenth century; height 52.5cm. The object was sold at Christie's Sale 6940, 12 October 2004 (lot 73). It has recently been exhibited widely and there is a photograph and brief note in the accompanying catalogues published by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture 2009: 95, no 47; 2010a: 97, no 48; 2010b: 128–29, no 52. All available online at http://www.akdn.org/museum/exhibitions.asp. There is also an image of the object online at http://www.akdn.org/museum/detail.asp?artifactid=1192.

16 Zozaya 2011: Fig. 32.

17 Arruda and Viegas 2002: cat. no 264; Zozaya 2011: 20, Fig. 33.

18 Gómez-Moreno 1951: 326, Fig. 391 (a); Zozaya 1967: 142, Fig. 4, lam. IId; Zozaya 2011: Fig. 24.

19 Gómez-Moreno 1951: 326, Fig. 390 (d); Zozaya 1967: 142, Fig. 4, lam. IId; Zozaya 2011: Fig. 24, who publishes a photograph of the pillar of this lampstand resting on a baluster base (see also Fig. 31 for a drawing of the same object). The projections (probably birds) that originally radiated outwards from the four corners of the domed top of the pillar are now missing, but the stumps and scars where they were joined to the top are still to be seen.

20 Zozaya 2011: Fig. 29.

21 Inv. no M.67–1953. The fragment was donated by Walter Leo Hildburgh who apparently acquired it in Madrid in 1915. I am grateful to Mariam Rosser-Owen for information about and images of this object; see also Hildburgh 1921.

22 Gómez-Moreno 1951: 326, Fig. 390 (e); Zozaya 1967: lam. IVb.

23 Gómez-Moreno 1951: 326, Fig. 390 (f); Zozaya 1967: lam. IVd.

24 See relevant bibliography in n. 6 above.

25 Ferhat et al. 2003: 290, no 209. See also Qantara: Patrimoine Méditerranéen, online at: http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_document.php?do_id=744&lang=fr. A similar bronze bird, also from the Qal'a Bani Hammad and now in the National Museum of Cirta in Constantine (inv. no 4 H.br.98), has almost identical dimensions but was attached only by its feet to the object whence it came: see Cherid 2010.

26 See, for example, Bivar 1966: 382 and Fehérvári 1966: 150.

27 For example, Christie's Sale 7871, 5 October 2010 (lot 11): sold to a Middle Eastern dealer.

28 Zbiss 1955 and 1960.

29 Zbiss 1955: 68 (lists of foliated Kufic and cursive inscriptions), to which should be added those in the Appendix, 87–88. For the Banu Khurasan, see 38–42.

30 Diodorus Siculus 1933–67, vol. XI: Book 23, Chapter 18, 114–15.

31 Al-Muqaddasi 1906: 333.

32 Al-Idrisi 1970–78: 606–7.

33 In 1282, Superior contributed 100 *salme* of barley and 200 sheep, Inferior 50 *salme* of barley and 100 sheep. These records are conveniently tabulated in D'Angelo 1978: 73, 82.

34 For 1277: Caltavuturo 180 *tarì*, 900 hearths; Polizzi 240 *tarì*, 1200 hearths. For 1282: Caltavuturo 200 *salme* of wheat, 300 *salme* of barley, 100 cattle, 200 sheep, 100 pigs; Polizzi 500 *salme* of wheat, 600 *salme* of barley, 100 cattle, 2000 sheep, 200 pigs. For 1283: Caltavuturo 160 *tarì*, 800 hearths; Polizzi 500 *tarì*, 2500 hearths. See D'Angelo 1978: 73, 82.

35 Malaterra 1927–28: 36.

36 Malaterra 1927–28: 38.

37 Cusa 1982: 310–11.

38 Garufi 1899: 81–83.

39 Garufi 1899: 163–64.

40 Cusa 1982: 310–11.

41 Garufi 1899: 81–83.

42 Cusa 1982: 74–75. For the important Norman family of Avenel, see Ménager 1991.

43 Cusa 1982: 484–86.

44 Garufi 1899: 240–42.

45 Brühl 1987: doc. 16, 45–48; White 1938: 54, 57, 135, 136.

46 Jaffé and Loewenfeld 1885–88: nos 9338, 11590; White 1938: 135.

47 Di Giovanni 1880; Giambruno 1909: xviii, 1, 2, 174, 179; White 1938: 219, 224–26; Cusa 1982: 650–52; Enzensberger 1996: doc. 32, 85–87 (with unfortunate errors); Johns 2002: no 36, 311.

48 Cusa 1982: 360–62; Enzensberger 1996: doc. 9, 26–28 (with unfortunate errors).

49 Garufi 1899: 81–83.

50 Scaduto 1947: 152.

51 Brühl 1987: doc. 16, 45–48.

52 Brühl 1987: doc. 16, 45–48; Cusa 1982: 310–11; Garufi 1899: 81–83.

53 Although the present church dates from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, its south door seems to belong to the fourteenth century.

17

THE METAL MOUNTS ON ANDALUSI IVORIES: INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

MARIAM ROSSER-OWEN

The carved ivory caskets which survive from caliphal al-Andalus form one of the most splendid groups of objects ever carved from this material,[1] and one of the most coherent sets of royal commissions from the medieval Islamic world.[2] But while these beautiful ivory caskets have been the focus of many studies – a body of scholarship which I will assume is familiar to readers of this article – no one has ever written about their metal mounts. It is often simply assumed that these were added at a later point in the object's life, and are therefore not original; they are frequently passed over without mention, unless they are obviously modern. One of the problems with understanding the mounts is that metalwork production in al-Andalus has been very little studied: while much has been found through archaeology, we cannot simply assume (as has been done in the past) that objects found in Spain were made there, since al-Andalus played a key role in Mediterranean trade, and since metalwork forms and techniques were shared across the Islamic Mediterranean, such objects might equally have been made in Fatimid Egypt or Syria. Objects such as the architectonic candelabra and bird-shaped aquamanilia are assumed to be products of al-Andalus, though there has been no thorough analytical study of these objects, and the Latin signatures incised on two key pieces imply that they could equally well be ecclesiastical objects produced and consumed by Iberia's Mozarabic Christian communities.[3] The metalwork objects that *do* seem to have been made in al-Andalus – such as the famous bronze fountain heads in the form of deer – are not made of precious metal, and may not have been royal objects, though they are frequently associated with the famous text describing the jewel-incrusted golden fountain heads in the form of a

menagerie of birds and animals which 'Abd al-Rahman III (r.912–61) commissioned to adorn a fountain in the heart of his palace-city, Madinat al-'Zahra'.[4]

The preparation of the Victoria and Albert Museum's Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art, which opened in July 2006, provided an opportunity to study closely the museum's collection of seven Andalusi ivories, five of which have metal mounts, and to combine approaches with colleagues in the V&A's Conservation Department. We studied the metal mounts by the non-destructive methods of optical microscopy and qualitative X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF), and this analysis yielded some interesting results.[5] The questions posed by these scientific studies necessitated a re-evaluation of the ivories' mounts from a more stylistic perspective, and the initial observations presented in this article have grown out of that research. A new consideration of the metal mounts on the Andalusi ivories is a place to begin a more objective study of Andalusi metalwork, and begins to answer a question that James asked me a long time ago…

MOUNTING THE IVORIES

The Andalusi ivories were made in two forms: a cylindrical pyxis with a domed lid (see Fig. 17.1), and a rectangular casket with either a flat or pitched lid. Metal examples exist with the same pitched shape, and it is possible that the ivories imitated a metal form. The cylindrical form, however, is perfectly suited to the natural shape of the elephant's tusk, out of which the objects were all made. They were carved from solid blocks of ivory, except for the larger caskets, which were formed from thick plaques attached to each other with ivory pegs, and occasionally reinforced with a wooden core or textile lining. We know that mounts were integral to their designs, since we can see from the ivories which have lost them that areas were left uncarved where the mounts were attached.[6] These were usually arranged with two narrow arms at the back and one at the front, and had a standard shape, with pointed, heart-shaped terminals. Mounts which stylistically are obviously later usually follow the space which has been left in the ivory, so shape itself does not indicate originality. A rectangular area at the front of the object was left plain for the lockplate, and sometimes this was later recarved: for example, a plaque in the V&A (inv. no 4075–1857) shows what may be St Matthew, carved perhaps in the thirteenth century when this plaque may have been reused as a book cover on a copy of that evangelist's gospel.[7]

Drill-holes through the points at top and bottom show that the mounts were attached to the ivory with pins: these drill-holes are clearly visible on those ivories that have lost their mounts. Where the original mounts survive, silver pins can be seen, almost flush with the body of the mount so they do not disturb the decoration, and are neatly finished

on the interior. They would originally have been hidden behind textile linings. The mounts are hinged at the back, at the junction of the lid and body, allowing the lid to be lifted back without detaching from the body. Another hinge at the front allows the front flap to be lifted up from the lockplate. Through repeated use over time, these hinges would become weak and would be the most likely points at which the mounts would break. This explains why so many of the ivories have lost their original mounts.

The location of the mounts also shows how we should read the objects, by clearly indicating which side is the front and back. Some ivories, however, seem to have had no mounts at all. On the al-Mughira pyxis (dated 357/968),[8] for example, no space has been left in the ivory for mounts: those which it now bears have clearly been attached at a later date, as they have obliterated part of the inscription. There is no indication in the object's inscription nor in its complex iconography which of its four medallions would originally have been at the front.[9] On the two 'sides' of the pyxis – above the scenes with the young musician standing between seated figures, and the date palm being harvested by men on horseback – there are almost invisible drill-holes, one above the other, through the bottom of the lid and the top of the body, suggesting that instead of mounts the lid was held on by chains or cords, which have since disappeared. The same system is used on the Braga pyxis (c.1004–8), which also does not leave room for mounts in its carving. This was not a standard system for mounting cylindrical caskets though: the Ziyad pyxis in the V&A (see below) has the same kind of holes at the 'sides', but still incorporates space in the carving for mounts; the Zamora pyxis does not seem to have holes for cords, and has its full complement of mounts, as we shall see. The cylindrical caskets all originally had a spherical knop integral to their lids, which would have helped the owner to lift the lid, especially if the casket did not have metal mounts: this knop survives intact on the Zamora, al-Hakam, Hispanic Society and Braga pyxides.

The mounts obscured the dense designs on these objects, or limited the available space for carving, so they were kept to a minimum size. The magnificent Pamplona casket (dated 395/1004–5), which is the largest of all the Andalusi ivories,[10] has no strapmarks on the lid, and the plain areas indicate that a simple buckle would have attached the lower part of the lid to the lockplate. At the back, the lid would merely have been hinged to the body, but no corresponding plain areas have been left in the lower half of the casket, making it difficult to understand how the hinges would have been supported. Like the Braga pyxis, this casket was made for 'Abd al-Malik, the 'Amirid regent of the Umayyad caliphs, and the lack of mounts may have been a personal preference.

PRECIOUS CONTENTS

The mounts on the Andalusi ivories were functional, but they were not necessary. They did not hold the object together or provide essential structural support, as did the mounts on the ivory caskets made in Sicily in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.[11] Instead, they allowed the caskets to be locked. This implies precious contents, and the only two pieces of textual evidence relating to these ivories both indicate that these contents were perfumes and cosmetics.

The first is a passage by Ibn Hayyan, the eleventh-century historian of al-Andalus, which is the only historical text to mention the ivories. It provides a rare list of gifts sent by one of the Andalusi caliphs: in 934, 'Abd al-Rahman III sent a magnificent gift to Musa ibn Abi al-'Afiyya, his main ally among the Berber chieftains of the Maghrib. Among the many gifts were textiles, including *tiraz*; a 'caliphal casket' in silver, whose sides were decorated with gilded relief on a white ground, and which was lined with a purple textile (perhaps a piece of Byzantine imperial silk?); and a number of luxury perfume containers, including

> nine pyxides and caskets filled with diverse perfumes, among them a round silver pyxis, containing sandalwood mixed with amber; a pyxis of white ivory [filled] with incense seasoned with amber; another ivory pyxis with silver hinges which contained a small Iraqi vase filled with an excellent perfume of musk and amber; a third casket of ivory with silver hinges and a flat lid [filled] with royal perfumes; a glass casket with silver lid and chain, containing the powder which princes use against sweat in the summer; [and] a gilded Iraqi bottle with rosewater of the Iraqi caliphs…[12]

This passage is interesting for a number of reasons – for what it tells us about the status of these ivories in diplomatic relations and gift-giving, as well as clearly indicating that Andalusi ivory production was in full swing by 934; indeed, that the products were already good enough by that point to send out as diplomatic gifts. Though the earliest surviving objects are datable to the 960s, this source implies that the foundation of the industry by 'Abd al-Rahman III occurred much earlier, and may even be associated with the declaration of his caliphate in 929.

The passage also clearly associates the precious material of ivory with the precious metal of silver – in the grouping of silver and ivory objects in the gift, and the clear statement that the ivories' mounts were made of silver. Though we know little of the location and bureaucratic structure of the caliphal luxury-arts ateliers, we can reconstruct a basic picture from the fragmentary textual and epigraphic evidence, which indicates that both the ivory and precious-metal workshops were located at the palace-city of Madinat al-Zahra' itself. Members of the class of elite slaves who ran the

court administration held supervisory positions in these ateliers at various points in their careers: Jawdhar, for example, who carried through the commission of the Gerona casket (see below), as we know from its inscription, is also known from historical sources to have been 'superintendent of the gold- and silver-smiths'; and Durri al-Saghir, whose name appears in the inscriptions on the Zamora and al-Hakam pyxides, is known to have had a role in the royal textile workshop. It was probably through strict court control and interaction between the various branches of the workshops through shared personnel that artistic influences spread between, say, textiles and ivories, an example being the introduction of lobed medallions onto the ivories, a common way of structuring the decoration on contemporary textiles.

It would also not be surprising if the precious-metal workshops were physically associated with the mint, which was located at Madinat al-Zahra' between 947 and 976, because of obvious connections between raw materials and the techniques for working them. Historical sources suggest such an association, such as the anecdote about al-Mansur ibn Abi 'Amir exploiting his position as head of the mint to commission a magnificent model of a silver palace as a gift for Subh.[13] Though our understanding of precious-metal objects produced for the caliphal court is still limited, it seems likely that this was a highly developed industry, which flourished alongside that of ivory carving. It is worth noting, for example, the great availability and extensive mining of silver in the Córdoba area during the caliphal period, as indicated by finds such as a hoard of silver ingots found at Hornachuelos near Córdoba.[14]

The second source for the function of the ivories is a poem inscribed on the pyxis in the Hispanic Society of America (New York), probably made in the 960s (Fig. 17.1). It reads: 'The sight that I offer is the fairest of sights, the still firm breast of a lovely young woman. Beauty has bestowed upon me a robe clad with jewels, so that I am a vessel for musk, camphor and ambergris.'[15]

In addition to suggesting that the carved surface of this ivory might once have been studded with jewels and heightened with coloured pigments, this inscription informs us that the pyxis was a container for expensive perfumes. It is therefore intriguing that the dimensions of silver perfume bottles which have been excavated at Madinat al-Zahra' seem to match the interior dimensions of the cylindrical ivories, indicating that they could have fitted inside (Fig. 17.2).[16] Figures holding objects which seem to resemble these perfume bottles are even depicted on the ivories, such as the scene of seated figures entertained by a musician on the al-Mughira pyxis; or the two groups of seated figures on the front of the Pamplona casket, where in the right-hand medallion an attendant seems to use one of these small bottles as a sprinkler, to perfume the large bearded figure at the centre, who probably represents 'Abd al-Malik, the casket's owner.

FIG. 17.1 Ivory pyxis in the Hispanic Society of America, probably 960s (inv. no D752). Photograph © Hispanic Society of America, New York.

Perfumes were regarded as the height of luxury in the sophisticated culture of tenth-century Córdoba. Fragrance was an essential element in the model of court refinement which the Andalusi caliphs adopted. Elegant courtiers perfumed their bodies, including their hair and beards, their clothing and even their food, and perfumes were part of the ablutions process that preceded and followed a meal. Interiors were perfumed by burning incense in braziers, or by stirring open containers of solid perfumes, as described by Hammad al-Rawiyah, on being summoned into the presence of the Syrian Umayyad caliph Hisham (r.724–43): 'In front of him were containers of gold filled with crushed musk, which he stirred with his hand to diffuse the scent.'[17] Hammad also describes the caliph 'sitting on a red carpet … his clothes … of red silk perfumed with musk and ambergris'. Musk was perhaps the most valued perfume in Umayyad Córdoba, but camphor, ambergris and rosewater are all listed among the fragrances employed by 'kings and great personages'.[18] As such, these perfumes were the most generous of gifts. Indeed, according to Ibn Khaldun, one of the greatest gifts ever given in Islamic history was to 'Abd al-Rahman III from his vizier Ibn Shuhayd in 937. It included among its epic list hundreds of pounds of fragrant aloe-wood, approximately one hundred ounces of musk, and similar amounts of amber and camphor.[19]

FIG. 17.2 Silver perfume bottle excavated at Madinat al-Zahra', mid-tenth century. Museo Arqueológico Provincial, Córdoba, inv. no 24.205. Photograph © Glaire Anderson.

We must therefore adjust our way of thinking about the Andalusi ivories, to consider that their contents were likely to have been more precious than the containers – they were, as Robert Hillenbrand has called them, 'expensive wrapping paper'.[20]

LOCKING THE IVORIES

The presence of mounts and locks on these containers therefore proclaims the preciousness of their perfumed contents. But how did they lock? To answer this, we may compare the ivories with the few surviving examples of metal caskets for which there is clear evidence that they were made in al-Andalus. The most significant of these is the only surviving example of an object made in precious metal for an Andalusi caliph, the casket now in Gerona Cathedral, made for Hisham II (r.976–c.1010), to celebrate his designation as heir to the caliphate.[21] The casket is formed from a wooden core, covered with plates of gilt-silver decorated in *repoussé* and heightened with niello. There are clear resemblances between this casket and some of the ivories, especially the Pamplona casket, not least in its similar size and shape, the appearance and location of its dedicatory inscription, and the form of the palmettes which provide its only decoration.[22] Since it is contemporary

with many of the surviving ivories, it can be presumed that their locking mechanisms functioned in similar ways. On Hisham's casket, a hole at the end of the mount passes over a ring which protrudes from the lockplate, then a bar passes through the ring which locks the mount in place (Fig. 17.3a). The lock is formed by a complex screw mechanism, whereas on the pyxis in the Hispanic Society, the end of the mount passes over the ring on the lockplate and then, ingeniously, a hook attached to the mount loops into the ring to lock the pyxis (Fig. 17.3b). On the Zamora pyxis,[23] the mount passes over a ring which then turns through 90 degrees to lock the pyxis (Fig. 17.3c).

A feature of original mounts seems to be a small ring which dangles from the very tip of the front strap. It is seen on Hisham's casket (Fig. 17.3a), as well as a silver casket with nielloed decoration in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid, which is datable stylistically to the tenth or eleventh century.[24] These rings must be original because in both cases the 'mounts' are integral to the objects. They would make it easier to lift up the front strap when it had been unlocked. They are also seen on the Zamora pyxis (Fig. 17.3c), dated 353/964 and made for Subh, the favourite concubine of al-Hakam II, and on a small pyxis made for al-Hakam himself (Fig. 17.4), now in the V&A (inv. no 217-1865).[25] This pyxis is unique among the caliphal ivories for being carved in openwork, which would have allowed the fragrance of its perfumed contents to pervade the room in which it was housed, a bit like medieval *pot pourri* – recalling Hammad al-Rawiyah's

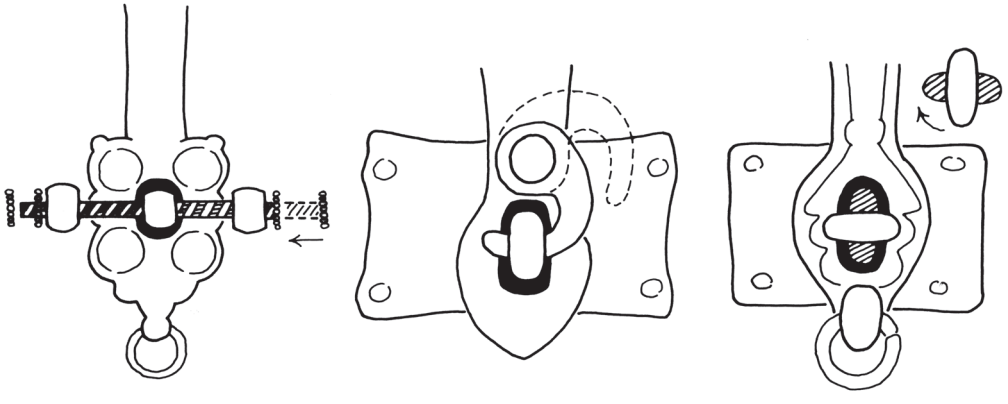

FIG. 17.3 Schematic drawing showing some of the different locking mechanisms used on tenth-century Andalusi ivories (not to scale). All are shown in the locked position. Drawing © Kent Rawlinson. a) Gerona casket, dated c.976. Treasury of Gerona Cathedral. b) Hispanic Society pyxis (see Fig. 17.1) c) Zamora pyxis, dated 964. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid, inv. no 2.113.

FIG. 17.4 Ivory pyxis made for the caliph al-Hakam II (r.961–76), probably 964. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (inv. no 217-1865). Photograph © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

description, cited above, of Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik's perfumed interior. Though the V&A pyxis is not dated, the almost identical inscriptions on these two ivories suggest that they were made as a joint commission. This was probably to celebrate the birth of their first son, 'Abd al-Rahman, in the previous year, especially considering that Subh, while not specifically named, is designated in the inscription as *umm al-walad*.[26] The suggestion that these two caskets were made as a pair is supported by the fact that their mounts are also identical, both formed from thin silver straps with a plain band of niello along the centre, leaving outer borders of gilt silver. They also lock in the same way. That this pair of objects has survived in different contexts and on different continents, but have identical mounts, suggests to me that they are original.[27]

XRF analysis of the mounts on the al-Hakam pyxis revealed the mounts to be predominantly silver, with copper and traces of lead in the niello. Niello is a black material composed of one or more metal sulphides, usually silver and/or copper, which is inlaid into a recess in metal and heated so it fuses to the surface; once cooled and polished, the colour contrast between the black niello and the metal surface of the object creates a decorative effect.[28] Though niello was widely used across the Roman world and in Byzantium, according to analyses conducted at the British Museum in the 1980s, lead is first found in niello in the eleventh century, in examples from Eastern Europe; in Western European examples, the earliest datable use of leaded niello seems to be the thirteenth century. However, the samples analysed did not include anything from Spain before the fifteenth century, or anything from the tenth or eleventh century from any European or Islamic region near to Spain, which might be expected to produce niello

according to the same technology. Given the strong likelihood that the Zamora and al-Hakam pyxides retain their original mounts, our analysis may therefore suggest that the introduction of lead in niello should be redated, and possibly reattributed to the Islamic world. Confirmation of this hypothesis, however, awaits comparative analyses of related objects.

STYLISTIC OBSERVATIONS

If we group the ivories which retain their mounts according to the surface decoration of these mounts, some distinct groupings emerge. The simple bands of silver with plain inlaid strips of niello on the Zamora and al-Hakam pyxides form the first group. A second group consists of silver mounts with incised patterns and niello inlaid to form a design. The key object in this group is another casket in the V&A (inv. no 301–1866), made for the daughter of the caliph ʿAbd al-Rahman III soon after his death in 961, as indicated by a prayer for the dead which is included at the end of the inscription.[29] This and two other ivories associated with it through near identical inscriptions – the long cylindrical container in the Museo de Bellas Artes in Burgos,[30] and a second casket in the V&A (see below) – are the earliest datable Andalusi ivories. The mounts on this casket are extremely fine (Fig. 17.5), though the lockplate

FIG. 17.5 Mounts on the lid of the casket made for the daughter of ʿAbd al-Rahman III, about 962 (inv. no 301-1866). Photograph © Mariam Rosser-Owen, with the permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

and the lowest extremities of all the straps, below the hinges, have been replaced at a later date. The straps are held in place by small silver pins which are almost invisible against the decoration. This consists of incised designs, picked out with niello inlay to form guilloche bands along the arms of the mounts, and terminating in simple palmettes at the tips. These designs complement those carved in the ivory. They are also similar to those on a tiny heart-shaped box used to hold a relic of the tenth-century Christian martyr San Pelayo in the treasury of San Isidoro de León. This box has been assigned to the eleventh century, but given its stylistic affinity to the mounts on the V&A casket, it could well be earlier.[31]

The mounts on the Hispanic Society pyxis (Fig. 17.1) form a third group, which consists of silver mounts with decoration in relief, with niello inlaid into the recesses, and some gilding. The mounts on the Hispanic Society pyxis correspond so well to the designs in the ivory that it is tempting to believe they are original. At the back, a spiky relief design resembles the row of small leaves carved in ivory between the two straps, while the upper and lower tips of the mounts are decorated with fleshy palmette leaves which meet as a heart shape, recalling the palmettes carved in the ivory. Furthermore, there are similarities between the relief decoration on the mounts and on one of the surviving silver perfume bottles, which would make sense if the cylindrical ivories once contained perfume bottles such as these.

Again the pins that hold the mounts on are almost invisible. There is no ring at the front mount, but there is no need for it here, since the point of the mount drops below the lockplate, so it is possible to get the tip of a finger underneath to lift it. The ingenious locking device has already been mentioned. It is not known whether the large handle attached to the knop, which allows the pyxis to be easily carried, is original or not – it does not seem to have been a usual feature to drill an extra metal attachment through the knop on the lid, though there is a metal pin in this location on the Zamora pyxis.[32]

Another object that has mounts cast in relief is the second casket in the V&A which was made for the daughter of 'Abd al-Rahman III (inv. no A.580–1910).[33] These mounts are slightly different in that they are not straight straps with the decoration cast or inlaid onto them, but a 'chain' of linked heart shapes enclosing a simplified palmette. The mounts are therefore much more decorative than the others, though again their designs complement those in the ivory. XRF showed these mounts to have been added in two phases, the second phase being a repair in the same style as the earlier phase. The gilt silver mounts at the back of the casket, on the lockplate and at the bottom of the front mount, are probably the first (original?) phase, while the gilt copper alloy used for the top half of the front mount is probably a later repair. The mounts are held with pins only at the extremities, meaning that they tend to slip

around as the casket is handled, making them vulnerable to damage. Repeated use over time must have caused them to weaken and break; they were then replaced with a cheaper material, but the identical style and even application of mercury gilding meant that it was only analysis that could tell us this. The strap below the front hinge is missing, so it is not possible to say whether the locking device was the same as on the Hispanic Society pyxis.

All the caskets we have been discussing are dated or datable to the early 960s, indicating that these various different techniques for decorating mounts were being practised at the same time. These differences may indicate the involvement of different craftsmen in the precious-metal workshops. Few of the remaining extant ivories feature mounts which are likely to be their originals, though it is still possible to speculate about changes over time. In the ivories made under 'Amirid patronage at the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries, the amount of space left for mounts becomes much bigger – this can be clearly seen on the long rectangular box in Doha, dated 394/1003–4,[34] and on the large casket with a pitched roof in the V&A, datable around the same time through stylistic comparison with the Pamplona casket.[35] Both have mounts which are obviously much later – probably eighteenth century in the case of the V&A casket, and nineteenth or twentieth century in the case of the brass mounts on the Doha box. However, in both caskets, the plain areas left for the mounts are much thicker and the heart-shaped terminal much larger than in the earlier ivories. Additionally, on the Doha box, areas were left plain for mounts to wrap around either short end. This might suggest that in the later examples, the mounts became more decorative, or were increasingly conceived of as integral to the ivories' decoration.

This can be compared with some of the ivories produced later in the eleventh century, under the patronage of the Taifa kings of Toledo. A tiny pyxis in the David Collection – surely made from the tip of the elephant's tusk in an attempt to get the most out of the available material – has plain spaces left for mounts which would hinge the lid and body together.[36] This seems to be rather unnecessary on such a small object, where it would not have been a great effort to lift off the lid. It has often been commented that the comparatively simple and static style of these later ivories suggests a decline in carving skill, and the unnecessary integration of mounts may be another sign of decadence. A pyxis in the treasury of Narbonne Cathedral,[37] datable around mid-century, seems to retain its original mounts: it has the ring which dangles from the tip of the front mount, and the locking device whereby the ring which protrudes from the lockplate turns through 90 degrees. However, in comparison to the earlier ivories, the design of the niello inlay is very simple here, merely outlining a vertical row of silver-gilt circles.

The final 'group' consists of mounts which were added to the ivories later, but whose precise date it is not currently possible to determine. In some cases, these obviously

reflect the metalworking or jewellery traditions of the locality in which the object has been preserved – for example the casket in the Bargello, whose mounts conform to the style of twelfth-century Italy.[38] The majority of the mounts in this group are gilt bronze, of a relatively generic style and shape, and we cannot date or locate them without further study or scientific analysis.[39] This style seems to have become a Mediterranean standard in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: the two hundred or so ivory caskets attributed to Norman Sicily almost invariably have the same gilt-bronze mounts, indicating at least that those caskets preserve their original mounts. However, there do seem to be some regional variations that demand closer scrutiny. A group of caskets veneered with ivory or bone panels and with painted decoration is now identified as Almohad production of the late twelfth to early thirteenth century.[40] They feature coherent sets of mounts which terminate with openwork trefoils. The same style of mounts is seen on the pyxis in the V&A made for Ziyad ibn Aflah (inv. no 368–1880), indicating that it was remounted in al-Andalus around the thirteenth century.[41]

This is perfectly plausible: we know that other caskets were repaired and remounted in the medieval period, when they were dedicated to Iberian churches and cathedrals to serve as reliquaries, continuing their original function as the luxurious containers for precious contents, in a new cultural context. Examples like the Silos and Palencia caskets, both made in the first half of the eleventh century,[42] were refurbished in the thirteenth century with enamel mounts, probably made in the northern Spanish industry at Silos. These enamel plaques would have replaced lost or broken ivory panels, but also 'Christianised' the caskets in an obvious way. Though they had been secular objects made for Muslim patrons, their splendid beauty and luxury material were not at odds with the esteem bestowed upon them by the kings and bishops of Christian Spain. A parallel story of continued appreciation and reuse can certainly be posited for later Muslim rulers in al-Andalus, though the traditional view of the Almohads as religious puritans with no artistic sensibility has led art historians to overlook the extent to which they respected and responded to the arts of their Umayyad antecedents.

It is hoped that these initial observations on the metal mounts which adorn the surviving Andalusi ivory caskets start to shed some light on an under-studied aspect of these spectacular objects; also that they will encourage other scholars and curators to look more closely at the mounts, and consider what they can tell us about how these ivories have been continually esteemed by their various owners since the moment of their production; finally, that this contributes in a small way to a better understanding of the production of metalwork in medieval al-Andalus.

NOTES

1 I would like to express my sincere thanks to James Allan for his enthusiasm, support and encouragement since the very start of my career in the field of Islamic art. I owe him a debt of gratitude which I am very happy in some small measure to repay in this Festschrift.

2 Key works on this spectacular group of objects are Kühnel 1971b and von Folsach and Meyer 2005. Other works containing important contributions on the ivories are Dodds 1992: 41–47, and cat. nos 1–7; and Stanley 2004: 77–83.

3 The peacock-shaped aquamanile in the Louvre (inv. no MR 1569, on which see, most recently, Grabar 2002) and a double-beaked oil lamp in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional (inv. no 50.557; see Viguera Molins et al. 2001: 195).

4 Lévi-Provençal 1950: 148–49.

5 The analysis results are detailed in a companion article to this one (Viegas Wesolowska 2007). See also Viegas Wesolowska 2011. I would like to thank my colleagues Cátia Viegas Wesolowska, Sofia Marques and Lucia Burgio for their assistance with this analysis, and Susan La Niece of the Science Department at the British Museum, who kindly discussed our results with us and helped us to understand their context.

6 See, for example, the V&A panel inv. no 1057–1855 at http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O86555/casket-lid.

7 See http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O84532/plaque.

8 Dodds 1992: 192–97, cat. no 3 (Musée du Louvre, inv. no 4068).

9 Makariou 2010: 325.

10 Dodds 1992: 198–201, cat. no 4 (in the collection of the Museo de Navarra in Pamplona). The front and back panels of the casket are single pieces of ivory measuring 38.4cm in length; the casket is 23.6cm in height and its width is 23.7cm. That it was a *tour de force* of the ivory industry is indicated by the fact that the signatures of no fewer than five different craftsmen are hidden in various locations on the casket.

11 On which see Cott 1939 and Knipp 2011.

12 Viguera 1981: 264–65 (§§238–39).

13 Al-Maqqari, vol. II: 179.

14 On the exploitation of silver in caliphal Córdoba, see Grañeda Miñón 2008: my thanks to Anna McSweeney for bringing this reference to my attention. On the hoard of ingots, see the catalogue entry by the same author in Viguera Molins et al. 2001: 245.

15 Ecker 2004: 125–26.

16 Dodds 1992: 213, cat. no 12. The two very similar bottles discussed are both in the collection of the Museo Arqueológico Provincial de Córdoba (inv. nos 24.205 and 3.772). Their similar dimensions – a maximum of 7cm high by 5cm in diameter – indicate that the bottles may have had standard sizes. The cylindrical ivories also have fairly standard dimensions, dictated by the average diameter of an African elephant's tusk, and the length which can be cut from it without too much of a curve. Their

external dimensions – those which are usually published – are an average of 10cm diameter and 18cm high, including their domed lids. Two pyxides which have lost their lids (Louvre, inv. no OA 2774; Cloisters, inv. no 1970.234.5) are 10–11cm high. Allowing for an average thickness of 1cm for the ivory walls, it is clear that the sizes of the perfume bottles were adapted perfectly to fit inside the pyxides. With one bottle per casket, it is conceivable that a particularly significant owner – such as the royalty for whom these ivories were usually made – could have had quite a set of ivory pyxides lined up on their dressing table.

17 Al-Isfahani, vol. V: 157–58, cited in Hamilton 1988: 76. My sincere thanks to Glaire Anderson for this information on the status of perfumes at the Umayyad court, which comes from her book, *The Villa in Early Islamic Spain: Architecture and Court Culture in Umayyad Córdoba* (Anderson forthcoming).

18 Waines 1992: 730.

19 Al-Maqqari, vol. II: 150–53.

20 Personal communication.

21 Dodds 1992: 208–9, cat. no 9. The craftsmen's signatures are inscribed in a hidden position under the front mount, and are only visible when the casket is unlocked and this flap lifted in order to open the casket: they read 'the work of Badr and Tarif, his servants'.

22 On the possible significance of the similarities between the Gerona and Pamplona caskets, see Robinson 2007.

23 On this object, which is in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid (inv. no 52113), see Kühnel 1971b: cat. no 22, Pls 12 and 13.

24 Dodds 1992: 214, cat. no 13 (inv. no 50889). The inscription does not contain any information about who the object was made for, or when or where it was made.

25 See http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O76562/pyxis.

26 'Abd al-Rahman died in infancy so did not inherit the caliphate – his younger brother Hisham did so instead. Lévi-Provençal 1950: 173, 202–3.

27 While al-Hakam's pyxis was bought on the art market (from the Webb Collection), the Zamora pyxis has been in a cathedral treasury since medieval times, and only moved to the Museo Arqueológico Nacional as a result of the disentailment acts of the mid-nineteenth century.

28 See Allan 1979b: 19–20, and La Niece 1983.

29 See http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O76558/casket.

30 Dodds 1992: 190–91, cat. no 1 (inv. no 244).

31 O'Neill 1993: 98–99, cat. no 46.

32 Constancio del Alamo, curator of the pyxis at the Hispanic Society of America, believes the handle to be original (personal communication).

33 See http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77077/casket; also Rosser-Owen 2005.

34 On this object, see Watson 2005.

35 This casket's silver mounts seem to have been added in the eighteenth century, judging by their style. See Beckwith 1960: 29. They may have been added at the same time as the

original inscription was deliberately erased, leaving a plain band running around the base of the lid: a small remnant of carving can be seen under magnification under the left-hand nail which holds the mounts in place at the front of the lid.

36 *Les Andalousies* 2000: 149, cat. no 163; von Folsach and Meyer 2005, vol. II: 336–37, cat. no 26.

37 *Les Andalousies* 2000: 149, cat. no 162.

38 Von Folsach and Meyer 2005, vol. II: 326, cat. no 18.

39 Objects included in this group include the casket dated 966 in the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid (inv. no 4860; Kühnel 1971b: cat. no 24); the casket in the David Collection in Copenhagen (inv. no 5/2002, see von Folsach and Meyer 2005, vol. II: 308–313, cat. no 10); and the Braga pyxis, in the treasury of Braga Cathedral in Portugal, datable between 1004 and 1008 (Kühnel 1971b: cat. no 36).

40 Rosser-Owen 2010: 43–45. On these Almohad caskets, see also Macías 1993; Zozaya 1995a: cat. no 128; Azuar Ruiz and López Padilla 1997.

41 See http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O76682/pyxis. This casket is dated 359/969–70. It is also interesting for the remains of pigments on the surface of the ivory: blue as a background to the inscription, green on the vegetation, and red on the buds and flowers. XRF showed all these to be traditional pigments (azurite, cinnabar, copper), which cannot be easily dated by analysis. Consequently it is not possible to say when they were applied to the ivory, though this extra layer of decoration recalls the description given in the poem on the Hispanic Society pyxis.

42 The Silos casket is dated 1026–27; it survived in the treasury of Santo Domingo de Silos, in northern Spain, and is now in the Museo de Bellas Artes in Burgos (inv. no 198): see von Folsach and Meyer 2005, vol. II: 334–35, cat. no 25. The Palencia casket, now in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid, is dated 1050, making it the latest dated casket to survive from al-Andalus: see Dodds 1992: 204–6, cat. no 7 (inv. no 57371).

18

THE MARBLE SPOLIA FROM THE BADI‘ PALACE IN MARRAKESH

NADIA ERZINI AND STEPHEN VERNOIT

The Badi‘ palace in Marrakesh, built by the Sa‘dian sultan Ahmad al-Mansur al-Dhahbi (r.1578–1603), is a key building in the architectural history of the Maghrib, as it is one of the few palaces for which we have contemporary Arabic and European descriptions and representations, as well as a record of the poems that were inscribed on its walls.[1] The palace is now a disappointingly empty ruin, with only some of its walls and the foundations of its principal rooms, cruciform courtyard and basins revealed by excavation. However, it was one of the few buildings in Morocco whose architectural elements were so fine as to merit its repeated pillage for several centuries after it was abandoned. This essay will bring together the published evidence of spolia from the palace and include newly discovered examples of spolia (carved marble columns, capitals, door jambs and window frames) that can be associated with it.

In 1578, five months after his victory at the Battle of the Three Kings, Ahmad al-Mansur began the construction in Marrakesh of his principal palace for official receptions, the Qasr al-Badi‘ (‘the Splendid, Marvellous, or Incomparable Palace’). In 1591 he conquered the Songhay Empire in Mali and its gold mines, which earned him the epithet ‘the Golden’. This venture allowed him to spare no expense in the construction of the palace. An inscription with the date of completion of 1592–93 is recorded in the contemporary sources, but work continued at the palace on a small scale until the sultan’s death in 1603. It was considered one of the wonders of the age.

According to the Sa‘dian minister, historian and court poet ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Fishtali (d.1621–22), Ahmad al-Mansur imported marble from Italy in exchange for

its equal weight in sugar, which was produced for the sultan in southern Morocco.[2] There is evidence of trade in marble between Ahmad al-Mansur and Francesco de Medici of Florence,[3] and in 1581 at a marble quarry in Pisa, Michel de Montaigne observed 50 marble columns being cut and carved for the Moroccan sultan: 'ils travaillèrent pour le roi de Fez en Barbarie à une très riche oeuvre d'un théâtre qu'il a dessein de faire avec cinquante très grandes colonnes de marbres'.[4] In 1609 an anonymous English source mentioned the 'love he [Ahmad al-Mansur] tooke in entertaining forraigne artisans, the reedifying of his house in Morruecos, getting Italian marbles, the richest that could bee bought for money, and workmen hired from thence at great wages'.[5] There is archival evidence for Italian, Spanish and English artisans and materials requested by Ahmad al-Mansur, and merchants from those countries supplying marble and his other needs in Marrakesh.[6] The 'Alawi historian Muhammad al-Saghir al-Ifrani (d.1747) wrote that material and artisans came from Europe for the building of the palace, and he recorded a letter of Ahmad al-Mansur referring to the continued acquisition of marble columns for the Badi' palace in 1602.[7]

Al-Ifrani later reported that at the celebration of the completion of the Badi' palace, a court jester was asked what he thought of it, and he said that when demolished the palace would make a large pile of rubble.[8] This trenchant remark, however spurious, reflects the swift demise of the Sa'dian dynasty and the destruction and pillaging of the palace. Soon after al-Mansur's death, during the fight for succession by his sons, grandsons and other rebels, the palace continued to be inhabited but suffered damage by opposing troops. Already in 1604 John Smith mentioned the state of abandon of the palace and gardens.[9] In 1668–69, the first 'Alawi sultan, Rashid (r.1666–72), resided at the palace, but in 1677, when Sultan Isma'il (r.1672–1727) received a Portuguese embassy in Marrakesh, he is said to have regretted the decayed state of the Badi' when the ambassador requested to see it.[10] In 1672, 1674–75, 1677 and 1683, Isma'il besieged Marrakesh and the Badi' palace to quell revolts by his nephew Ahmad ibn Muhriz. Another uprising in Marrakesh was led by Isma'il's son Muhammad al-'Alim in 1703, and the town was further pillaged by the troops of Isma'il's son Zaydan.[11]

By 1684 the French consul at Salé, Jean Périllié, reported that marble from Marrakesh was being loaded on ships for transport from the port of Safi en route to Meknes.[12] In 1695 his successor, Jean-Baptiste Estelle, reported seeing nine wagons transporting 12 columns from Marrakesh to Meknes. Isma'il had sent masons to destroy the Badi' and remove the marble columns to his new capital. Estelle specifically described four of the columns as having shafts half fluted and half carved with floral decoration, and well-carved capitals and bases. He said that Isma'il wanted to demolish anything that rivalled his palace at Meknes:

> Je tenois pour fabuleux ce qu'on m'avoit escrit de Miquenez, fait 3 mois, qui est que le roy de Maroc avoit envoyé des maçons à Maroc pour mettre bas le fameux chasteau de cette dite ville et de faire transporter toutes les colomnes de marbre qui sont au dit chasteau à Miquenez, ce qui a esté executé. Ce jourd'huy 22 de novembre est arrivé en cette ville neuf charrettes chargées de très belles colomnes de marbre, en nombre de 12, dont 4 estoient sysellées jusques au milieu et le restant de fleurs, ses pieds d'estail aussy bien travaillez, et, suivant a que je puis conjeturer au recit qu'on fait de ce chasteau et ce que j'ay veu de ses colomnes, il faloit qu'il fut très magnifique: cependant le roy Mouley Ismael le fait abbatre, ou pour le moins oster ce qu'il y a de beau et de bon, afin que celuy qu'il fait à Miquenez depuis 20 ans, qui est sans aucune beauté ny reguliarité, soit le plus beau qu'il y aye dans ses royaumes. Et à quoy personne n'ose rien dire à cause de l'abatement que ce prince tient ses sujets.[13]

One pier was left behind in Safi, a composite pier consisting of three attached columns and capitals carved from one piece of marble, of a type discussed below. When it was discovered in 1908, its date and provenance were not understood.[14]

Although al-Ifrani states that Isma‘il demolished and looted the Badi‘ palace in 1707–8, 'for reasons that are too many to enumerate', and that there was no city in Morocco that did not receive spolia from it,[15] it is likely, as we have seen, that the process began twenty years earlier. According to al-Ifrani, when Isma‘il destroyed the palace, he intended to erase all trace of it, as it glorified the reign of Ahmad al-Mansur.[16] Deverdun has since argued that it was not dynastic competition that motivated Isma‘il but the irreversible decay suffered during Isma‘il's sieges of Marrakesh and the need for construction material for Meknes.[17] Tazi has added that among the reasons for the demolition of the Badi‘ palace were the epidemics caused by the extensive waterworks and pools; Isma‘il is said to have called the palace *Umm Maldam* (the Mother of Malaria).[18] At the same time that he had the Badi‘ pillaged, Isma‘il also demolished the Marinid madrasa of Abu'l-Hasan in Marrakesh and the remains of other palaces in the *qasba* of the town, and looted their marble elements.[19] Deverdun compared Isma‘il's taking marble from the Badi‘ to the Ottoman Sultan Selim taking marble booty from the Mamluk palaces in the citadel of Cairo in 1517.[20] But as the spoils from Marrakesh were not sufficient for Isma‘il, he also imported carved marble from Europe. The diplomat Georg Höst tells us that Isma‘il imported marble columns from Livorno and Marseille, hence the gigantic classicising capitals and columns of the Bab al-Eulj in Meknes, that owe nothing to Sa‘dian taste.[21]

Whatever his reasons, Isma‘il's looting of the Badi‘ palace began a trend that was continued by successive Moroccan sultans well into the nineteenth century. Perhaps Isma‘il did not completely destroy the palace, as later sultans also used spolia from it. However, it is also possible that later sultans pillaged from Isma‘il's buildings and not directly from Marrakesh, especially after the Meknes palace was damaged during

the earthquake of 1755. While Isma'il's use of Badi' spolia at his palace in Meknes is documented (although meriting closer examination), the continued use of the spolia by later 'Alawi sultans has not been studied. The royal building programmes of the nineteenth century, in particular at the Rasif mosque and the tomb of Mawlay Idris II in Fez, have much information to yield.

Isma'il's grandson Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah (r.1757–90) did not seek to build a palace rivalling the Badi', although he is known to have admired the reign of Ahmad al-Mansur as a sort of 'golden age'. This 'Alawi sultan emulated the court usages of the Badi' as recorded in al-Fishtali's account of Ahmad al-Mansur's literary activities, pilgrimages and encampments. A copy of al-Fishtali's *Manahil al-safa'* was in Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah's library, and in 1765, during a pilgrimage to Aghmat, the sultan asked for long passages about Ahmad al-Mansur's pilgrimages to be read aloud to him.[22]

Although Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah returned the capital to Marrakesh, such was the destruction of the Badi' and other palaces in the *qasba* that when the sultan first arrived there, he camped in their gardens.[23] His own palace, mosque (the Dar al-Badi' mosque) and madrasa were built flanking the remains of the Badi'. However, he did use capitals from the Badi' palace in the courtyard arcade of his Dar al-Baida palace in Meknes. Nevertheless, the sultan's minister and secretary, the historian al-Zayyani, writing around 1818, could not resist comparing the Badi' palace unfavourably with the 'Alawi palaces at Meknes:

> I became aware, during the reign of Sidi Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah, of the importance of this building [the Badi'], even though it had been demolished and its woodwork and marble had been removed. I wished al-Fishtali were alive, so that he could see the construction at Meknes by the magnificent Sultan Isma'il … twenty houses or palaces, the smallest of which resembles the Badi' palace. The medium-size palaces [of Meknes] are much more magnificent, and it [the Badi'] would have fitted into a corner of the larger palaces [at Meknes]. All the marble found at the Badi' palace was taken to Meknes, but it was hardly sufficient to decorate two or three of his palaces.[24]

THE COLUMNS IN THE PRINCIPAL COURTYARD, MOSQUE AND BATHS OF THE BADI' PALACE

As carved marble columns were among the most numerous elements of spolia from the Badi' palace used by later rulers, it is interesting to speculate about their original placement in the building. The Badi' was excavated in 1950–55 by the Inspection des Monuments Historiques;[25] their plan shows an enormous principal courtyard (135 by 110m) of a cruciform design with projecting pavilions on the short sides, as seen at the Court of the Lions in the Alhambra and the courtyard of the Qarawiyyin mosque

in Fez. The main walls and the projecting pavilions of the palace survive, but not the colonnaded arcades, nor the colonettes of the extensive pools, fountains and balustrades of the garden described in contemporary sources.[26] For example, there was an arcade preceding each of the six large reception rooms on the long sides of the Badi' courtyard. In 1623, when Jacob Golius visited Marrakesh for several months with a Dutch embassy, he produced a plan of the Badi' that shows the layout of the courtyard columns.[27] In a view of the *qasba* of Marrakesh that was painted in 1585 by a Portuguese redemptionist father,[28] the courtyard arcade appears to consist of both semicircular and *muqarnas* arches, with alternating wide and narrow spans. This is familiar from the Alhambra, the Qarawiyyin mosque and the Sa'dian tombs in Marrakesh. The spolia examined below includes *muqarnas* arches executed in marble and carried on marble colonettes.

Only the walls but no columns survive of the projecting pavilions on the short sides of the Badi' courtyard. These pavilions measured 16 by 14.7m, constituting open-sided reception rooms in themselves. Their domes were perhaps originally carried on a further 12 interior columns, as in the tomb chamber of Ahmad al-Mansur in Marrakesh. Golius's plan of the Badi' in 1623 and the painting of 1585 both show a double row of columns around the pavilions. Golius noted on his plan that these columns were of alabaster (presumably marble) while the columns of the long side were of jasper and were so wide that 'a Man can scarce encompass round with his arms'.

The only evidence of the colonnades of the Badi' excavated on site were several huge monolithic sandstone capitals, the square top of each capital measuring 50 by 50cm.[29] These capitals were quarried locally in the Atlas Mountains. We do not know what their column shafts were made of, although there are many contemporary descriptions of marble, onyx, alabaster and jasper columns. Al-Fishtali, for example, states that there were white, black and coloured (or veined) marble columns, and their capitals were covered with molten gold or gold leaf.[30] The sandstone capitals discovered on site might have been gilt. These capitals are in what can be called the Sa'dian 'Maghribi-Andalusi' style. They have two sections, an upper cubic part decorated with floral designs, and a lower cylindrical part decorated with two rows of meanders. Georges Marçais discussed this type of capital and illustrated one from the Badi' that was in the Dar al-Batha Museum in Fez.[31] Some of the sandstone capitals found on site were carved in monolithic groups of three attached capitals. They were intended to surmount composite piers of three attached columns, a caprice that will be seen again in the spolia discussed below, although on a smaller scale. The scale of the sandstone capitals suggests that they were used in the monumental courtyard arcade of the Badi'.

Somewhat smaller columns were probably used in the interiors of rooms in the Badi'. On Golius's plan some rooms are described as bedchambers with arches, which correspond to the bed alcoves (Ar. *al-haniyya*) familiar from Nasrid and Marinid

domestic architecture, where the arches of the raised alcoves are carried on columns. Columns were also used in the palace's mosque, at the bottom right of Golius's plan, of which the decoration was said to be unequalled anywhere, superior even to the palace itself. The traveller Jean Mocquet, who visited Morocco between 1601 and 1607, described the mosque: 'Mais, à la seconde court oú j'entray aussi, ce sont petites galeries soustenues par colonnes de marbre blanc, si bien et dextrement taillées et ouvragées que les meilleurs ouvriers en admirent l'artifice.'[32] A royal bathhouse that flanked the mosque, marked on Golius's plan, was built with 50 columns. Thus there was ample use of both monumental and smaller columns.

In 1918, Aimel noted that so plentiful was the Badi' spolia scattered around Marrakesh that columns of red jasper and black marble could be found on the steps and thresholds of public fountains, houses and mosques, their fine carving worn away over the centuries.[33] There are also examples of fine Sa'dian marble carving in the mosques of Marrakesh, but it is difficult to establish in these instances whether we are dealing with sixteenth-century Sa'dian patronage or later pillaging from the Badi'.

THE FOUR STYLES OF CARVED MARBLE FROM THE BADI' PALACE

Marble columns and capitals can be found in many medieval mosques and madrasas of Morocco. There is also a medieval tradition of using spolia, of which examples can be seen in the Great Mosques of Kairouan and Córdoba, and in the Qarawiyyin mosque of Fez. Alfred Bel suggested that in the medieval period marble was usually imported from Spain and Italy; he thought there was no white marble in Morocco, although some yellowish-white marble-onyx was quarried near Tlemcen for the Marinid dynasty.[34] In the late sixteenth century, however, a greater quantity of marble was apparently applied to royal buildings in Morocco, as exemplified by the Badi', and a significant quantity was imported from Italy. As more marble was available, it was put to a wider variety of uses, including door-jamb panels and window arches.

The decoration of the carved marble from the Badi' is also more varied in style than that of medieval and earlier Sa'dian buildings, and Ahmad al-Mansur's reign marks a clear change in patronage. Four styles of carved marble can be identified from the late Sa'dian period and labelled as follows: the 'Maghribi-Andalusi', 'Italian Renaissance', 'Ottoman-Turkish' and 'combined Ottoman-Moroccan' styles. Parallels for the marble in a Maghribi-Andalusi style can be found in Sa'dian mosques, the Sa'dian tombs and in the Ibn Yusuf madrasa in Marrakesh. However, the marble decorated in the Italian Renaissance and Ottoman-Turkish styles is rarer, and can be studied primarily through the evidence of Badi' spolia.

The decoration in the Maghribi-Andalusi style includes floral, geometric and pseudo-Kufic motifs, all familiar from other media, such as stucco or silks. The designs on these Sa‘dian columns continue earlier Nasrid and Marinid traditions, but the Sa‘dian columns and capitals are distinctively elongated and their shafts unusual in being covered with carving, an innovation of the early Sa‘dian dynasty.[35] Furthermore, the Badi‘ appears to be the only building with composite triple-column piers, where the three shafts and capitals are each formed from one slab (Fig. 18.1). These piers were presumably used for the corners of courtyard arcades and pavilions or for *mihrab* niches. While the Sa‘dian columns in the Maghribi-Andalusi style occur both singly and in composite piers of three columns, the carved columns in the Italian Renaissance and Ottoman-Turkish styles occur only as single columns. The precedent for groups of two and three columns can be found in the Great Mosques of Kairouan and Córdoba, and the Court of the Lions in the Alhambra,

FIG. 18.1 Carved marble pier with three colonettes, capitals and bases cut from one monolithic stone, the shafts decorated in the Maghribi-Andalusi style and inscribed with the name of Ahmad al-Mansur. Probably from the Badi‘ palace. Reused at the *mihrab* of the Rasif mosque, Fez, built in 1791–92. Photo: Nadia Erzini/ Stephen Vernoit.

although there the columns are free-standing, not carved from one block. In this context it can be noted that 'Al-Hamra' was one of the names given to the Badi' palace.[36]

Motifs taken from Italian Renaissance architecture were introduced at the Badi' for the first time in Moroccan architectural history, alongside Ottoman-Turkish motifs taken from tile-work and textiles. A much greater quantity of Italian carved marble capitals and columns (often with spiral fluting on the shaft) can be found in contemporary and later buildings of Ottoman Algiers and Tunis. The Italian Renaissance columns in Morocco all have the same design: the lower third of their shaft is carved with a symmetrical acanthus design, incorporating cornucopia and fruit (Fig. 18.2), while the upper part is fluted. The capitals surmounting them are usually in a Corinthian style. While the columns in the Maghribi-Andalusi style were possibly carved locally by someone well-versed in this tradition, the columns in the Italian Renaissance style were clearly imported from Italy, ready carved by skilful craftsmen. They confirm Montaigne's account of the Pisan quarry.[37]

FIG. 18.2 Carved marble column in the Italian Renaissance style, with the lower half carved with acanthus designs, in the New Mosque added to the Mausoleum of Mawlay Idris II in Fez by Sultan 'Abd al-Rahman in 1824–25. Photo: Nadia Erzini/Stephen Vernoit.

The best known examples of Italian Renaissance columns in Morocco are those on the western fountain pavilion of the Qarawiyyin mosque, of which the date is uncertain, possibly built for the Sa'dian sultan 'Abdallah ibn al-Shaykh (r.1613–24, intermittently) over a marble fountain installed by Ahmad al-Mansur in 1588.[38] Marçais admitted that the contemporary sources were not very clear about the date of its construction. In the light of the discovery of identical columns from the Badi' (described below) and given the interrupted nature of later Sa'dian rule and the collapse of Moroccan trade after the death of al-Mansur, it is probable that the Italian Renaissance columns of the Qarawiyyin were imported earlier than 1613–24, by Ahmad al-Mansur, for use in either Fez or Marrakesh.

The third type of spolia that can be associated with the Badi' is marble carved in the Ottoman-Turkish style (Fig. 18.3). The shafts of the columns are entirely carved with Ottoman-style designs in a drop-repeat pattern of ogival medallions, and within the medallions are symmetrical designs of flowers from the Ottoman repertoire: stylised carnations, tulips, hyacinths and swirling *saz* leaves. The compositions are finely executed,

FIG. 18.3 Carved marble column with a floral decoration within a drop ogival design, of Ottoman-Turkish origin, with a Turkish capital, in the New Mosque added to the Mausoleum of Mawlay Idris II in 1824–25. Photo: Nadia Erzini/ Stephen Vernoit.

closely resembling Ottoman textiles or Iznik tiles, and appear entirely within the norms of Ottoman design, although they seem strange on the curved surfaces of the columns. The columns carry capitals in a style that in North Africa is termed an Ottoman-Turkish style, consisting of two rows of four projecting volutes or large leaves. The Ottoman-Turkish columns are relatively fewer in number than the others. It is unclear whether they were carved by Turks, Italians or Moroccans, and whether they were imported to Morocco already carved, like the Italian columns, or carved at Marrakesh. As there seem to be no Ottoman parallels for these carved column shafts, they suggest a one-off and eccentric commission by a foreign patron, executed by well-informed Italian or Moroccan artists.

The second half of the sixteenth century was a period of Ottoman influence in Morocco, with the introduction of government and military reforms along Turkish lines by Ahmad al-Mansur and his brother ʿAbd al-Malik. Both princes spent several decades in Algiers and Istanbul, held *timar*s (fiefdoms) and fought in the Ottoman army at the Battle of Lepanto. Ahmad al-Mansur introduced Ottoman court rituals and fashions of dress, especially for the Turkish and renegade Christian soldiers at Marrakesh. His ambassador to the Topkapı, al-Tamgruti, records the use of Turkish pottery at celebrations in the Badiʿ, presumably Iznik wares, and a Spanish ambassador in 1579 reported that the palace was furnished with Turkish carpets, crimson and gold damask bedcovers and rich eastern silks.[39]

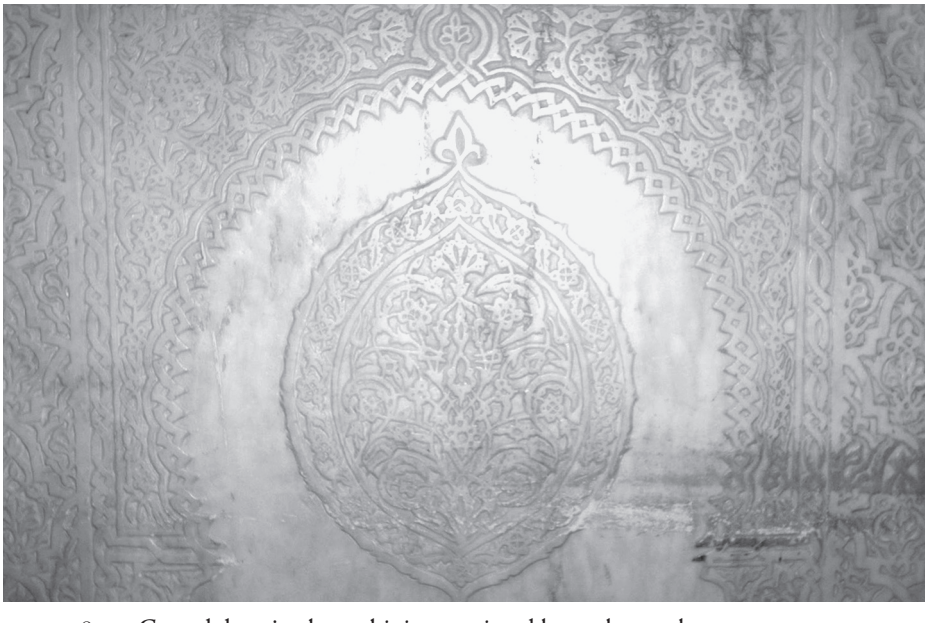

FIG. 18.4 Carved door jamb combining a pointed horseshoe arch and a medallion with an Ottoman-style floral bouquet, door to the tomb chamber of Sultan Ismaʿil, Meknes, early eighteenth century. Photo: Nadia Erzini/ Stephen Vernoit.

The fourth style of marble carving from the Badi‘, the combined Ottoman-Moroccan style, appears in a group of flat panels used as door jambs and in arched windows (Figs 18.4 and 18.5). These combine Ottoman floral designs of carnations, tulips, hyacinths and *saz* leaves etc., with Moroccan-style pointed horseshoe, cusped or *muqarnas* arches. The arches, and the lozenge net patterns and crenellations that frame the flowers, are clearly in the medieval Moroccan or Maghribi-Andalusi tradition. Sometimes these panels have a completely empty blind arch in the centre and carry relatively few Ottoman motifs, while other panels have a dominant central ogival medallion with a large Ottoman-style floral bouquet, similar to that on the Ottoman-Turkish columns. This juxtaposition of styles would indicate that the door jambs and window frames were carved in Morocco by artists well-versed in both traditions.

BADI‘ PALACE SPOLIA USED BY SULTAN ISMA‘IL IN MEKNES

As al-Ifrani stated, there was not a town in Morocco that did not receive elements pillaged from the Badi‘ palace. In 1927, Marçais reported seeing Sa‘dian capitals from the Badi‘ at Meknes but made no further comment.[40] Marianne Barrucand in 1976 and 1985 identified the Sa‘dian marble spolia used in Isma‘il’s palace at Meknes. Her photographs indicate three styles of Sa‘dian spolia used there. The Maghribi-Andalusi style can be seen in the composite piers carved to resemble three attached columns with attached capitals and bases, but all made from one piece of marble. Their shafts are carved with the same Maghribi-Andalusi designs illustrated above. These piers flank the *mihrab* of the mosque of the Palace of the Labyrinth (Qasr al-Mhansha) within the Meknes palace. Along the top of the three columns of the mosque of Qasr al-Mhansha is an inscription naming Ahmad al-Mansur.[41] In a similar style are the triple-column piers at the Dar al-Madrasa in Meknes.[42]

Columns and capitals in the Italian Renaissance style were also used in the Meknes palace, which was adorned with at least one arcade of these columns, with their shafts half fluted and half carved with acanthus and cornucopia. They occur in the Dar al-Madrasa, in a portico known as that of Sultan ‘Abd al-Rahman (r.1822–59).[43] The name of this portico might indicate an early-nineteenth-century rebuilding by this ‘Alawi sultan.

Although there are capitals in the Ottoman-Turkish style at the Meknes palace,[44] there are no published examples of column shafts in this style. The combined Ottoman-Moroccan style, however, can be seen on door jambs in the palace, as in the Dar al-Madrasa.[45]

At the nearby tomb of Sultan Isma‘il in Meknes, built before his death in 1727, can be found various elements of Badi‘ spolia; there are capitals in the Ottoman-Turkish style in the courtyard, capitals in the Maghribi-Andalusi style in the inner room beyond the tomb chamber,[46] as well as door jambs combining Ottoman and Moroccan motifs (Fig. 18.4).

BADI' PALACE SPOLIA USED BY SULTAN ISMA'IL IN FEZ AND MARRAKESH

Apart from the palace and tomb of Isma'il in Meknes, the best examples of the dispersal of Badi' spolia can be found in Fez. In 1717–18 or 1719–20, Isma'il rebuilt the Mausoleum of Mawlay Idris II at Fez with Badi' spolia. The tomb chamber was enlarged and the courtyard rebuilt, and a minaret built, demolished and rebuilt at its present site. Al-Kittani mentions that the sultan had black and white columns brought for the rebuilding of the mausoleum, although none of the sources specify that the sultan used spolia from the Badi'.[47]

One look at the 12 mismatched columns and capitals of the mausoleum's courtyard, however, is enough to indicate the use of spolia, and the obvious source is the Badi', which was pillaged for the Meknes palace several decades earlier and obviously continued to serve as a quarry for fine marble. Columns of black marble are indeed placed next to those of white marble. Some of the white columns have plain shafts, while others have their shafts fluted, in the Italian Renaissance style described above, but here cut in half. The resulting effect is rather stumpy, but economical: two short columns cut from one whole column. The columns are of at least three different heights and diameters, though they are arranged symmetrically in matching pairs. The difference in height is made up with heavy-looking impost blocks over the capitals. Some of the capitals and bases are too small for the columns, having a smaller diameter, while others are absolutely plain transitions from circle to square; other examples are elaborate swagged Corinthian capitals. Small red stone columns with Italian Renaissance-style capitals occur on the decorative external façade of the mausoleum as well, presumably red jasper spolia from the Badi' palace, the whole giving us a taste of the variety of the European columns and capitals that were originally used there.

There are also marble door jambs in the combined Ottoman-Moroccan style at the door leading from the courtyard to the tomb chamber of Mawlay Idris. As in the Meknes mausoleum, the door jambs do not exactly fit the width of the wall and the additional space is made up with cut-tile mosaics (*zalij*), confirming that the door jambs were not made to measure but taken from an earlier building.

Another element of carving in the combined Ottoman-Moroccan style can be found in the marble window frame of the timekeeper's room (*bit al-muwaqqit*) that flanks the minaret of the Mausoleum of Mawlay Idris II (Fig. 18.5). The minaret itself was meant to copy the dimensions of the Kutubiyya minaret in Marrakesh,[48] which perhaps reinforces the reference to the glories of Marrakesh introduced by spolia from the Badi'. The *muqarnas* arch of the window is carried on colonettes, and over it runs a *muqarnas* frieze. A design of carnations and tulips covers the spandrels of the arch.

A similar marble arch preserved in the Dar Batha Museum in Fez is known to have come from the Badi' palace.[49] Unfortunately it is not recorded where this arch was found; presumably it was reused in Fez. As with the door-jamb panels, the juxtaposition of Moroccan and Ottoman motifs would suggest that the window frames were carved in Morocco by artisans well versed in both traditions. There is another window of this type, although a double window with two *muqarnas* arches, at one of the rooms of seclusion (*bit al-i'tikaf* or *khalwa*), located in the southwest corner of the Qarawiyyin mosque.[50] This window predates the building of the Badi' palace, and therefore lacks the Ottoman floral motifs introduced by Ahmad al-Mansur.

Finally, the Mausoleum of Sidi Ahmad al-Susi in Marrakesh was built by Isma'il some time between the saint's death in 1718 and the sultan's in 1727.[51] Entire columns in the Italian Renaissance style (as seen above) are placed upside down in the portico leading to the tomb chamber, the most incongruous use of spolia from the Badi'.[52]

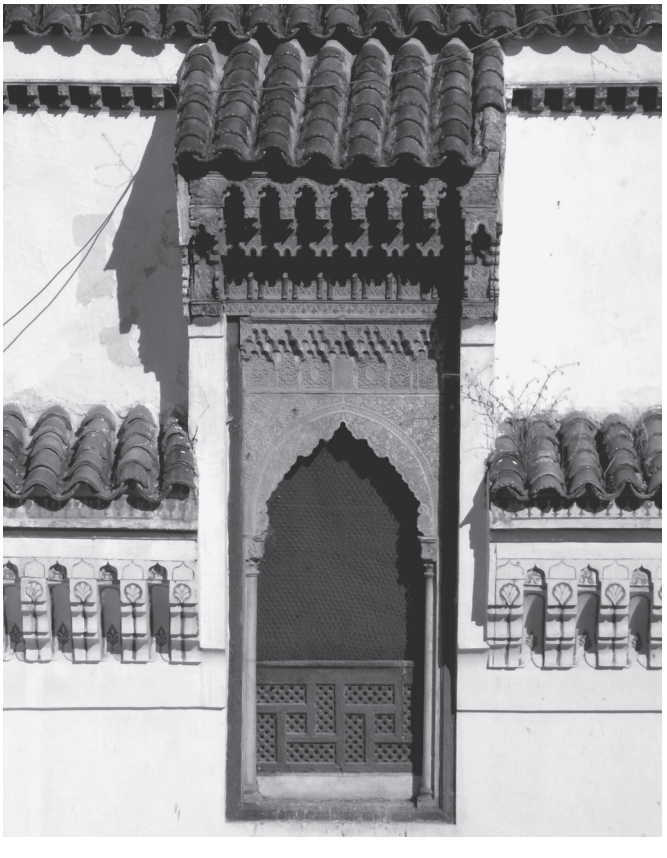

FIG. 18.5 Carved marble window with a *muqarnas* arch and Ottoman floral designs in the spandrels at the room of the timekeeper, flanking the minaret of the Mausoleum of Mawlay Idris II, Fez, around 1719–20. Photo: Nadia Erzini/ Stephen Vernoit.

BADI' PALACE SPOLIA USED BY LATER SULTANS

The Sa'dian triple-column piers used in the 'Alawi palace at Meknes also occur at the royal palace in Fez. There are examples of single columns with their shafts carved in the Maghribi-Andalusi style[53] and of triple-column piers carved from one block of marble. In 1914 John Horne, entering Fez with the French occupying forces under Lyautey, was commissioned to photograph the monuments. He commented on the Italian Carrara marble elements he saw in the royal palace. In particular he saw a composite triple-column pier and compared it to work he had seen in Italy, probably Venice, adding that such carving was rare in Morocco.[54] The Fez palace also used capitals in the Ottoman-Turkish style[55] and combined Ottoman-Moroccan-style door jambs, obviously reused as they do not fit the thickness of the wall.[56] Horne photographed a door-jamb panel combining Ottoman and Moroccan designs in the royal palace of Fez.[57] As this palace has seen extensive rebuilding[58] and has never been documented, we cannot know at what date these elements were pillaged from the Badi' palace and reused. It is possible that the Sa'dian marble at the royal palace in Fez was added not by Isma'il but in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, as our later examples indicate.

The Italian Renaissance style of carving can also be found on buildings of the 'Alawi sultan Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah, who emulated the style of Ahmad al-Mansur's court. As mentioned above, Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah used capitals in the Italian Renaissance style at the Dar al-Baida palace at Meknes, which was a new building, separate from Isma'il's complex.[59] Here the Badi' spolia might have been pillaged for a second time, from the palace in Meknes of his grandfather Isma'il, rather than directly from Marrakesh.

In 1791–92, Sultan Sulayman (r.1792–1822), the son of Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah, built the Rasif mosque in Fez.[60] In what is otherwise a typical early-nineteenth-century Moroccan mosque, in its large scale and sober lack of decoration both in the interior and on the minaret, the *mihrab* comes as a surprise. The *mihrab* arch is carried on two composite piers of triple columns from the Badi' (Fig. 18.1). The columns flanking the *mihrab* are recognisably of the Badi' type in the quality of their overall carving in the Maghribi-Andalusi style. The capitals have the typical elongated Sa'dian manner. Furthermore, the columns carry an inscription glorifying Ahmad al-Mansur: 'Firm victory and evident expansion of his power to our lord the imam Abi al-'Abbas Ahmad al-Mansur billah Prince of the Believers and Hasani Sharif'.[61] The style of the calligraphy is *mashriqi* not *maghribi*, and the letter 'f' is dotted above the letter, entirely consistent with the *mashriqi* influence on calligraphy patronised by Ahmad al-Mansur and found on his tombstone.[62]

Sulayman is known to have repaired Isma'il's palace in Meknes and Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah's palace in Marrakesh.[63] These palaces might have indirectly provided him

with spolia from the Badi‘ palace. Whatever the source of Sulayman’s *mihrab* columns, the use of columns with this inscription, and their position at the *mihrab* of his principal new mosque in Fez, appears to be a deliberate historicising reference to the ‘golden age’ of Ahmad al-Mansur.

The Badi‘ spolia did not go out of fashion. It can be found used in a royal building of the early nineteenth century, the mosque flanking the Mausoleum of Mawlay Idris II at Fez, known as the Jama‘ al-Jadid or New Mosque. This mosque was built by Sultan ‘Abd al-Rahman in 1824–25 over the site of a pre-existing house, and it greatly enlarged the mausoleum complex.[64] There are eight columns, some plain and others with shafts carved in the Italian Renaissance and Ottoman-Turkish styles. The shafts of the columns in the Italian Renaissance style were cut down, preserving the acanthus scrolls and removing the fluted upper half, as in the building of the courtyard of the mausoleum a century earlier (Fig. 18.2). The columns are incongruously topped with capitals of an Ottoman-Turkish style. The Ottoman-Turkish-style columns have shafts entirely covered by a drop-repeat pattern filled with Ottoman-style bouquets of flowers (Fig. 18.3). The latter columns constitute unique evidence of the Ottoman influence in Moroccan art in the sixteenth century.

In general, the descriptions by Moroccan historians of the building projects of Sa‘dian and ‘Alawi sultans are frustratingly vague and formulaic, sometimes inaccurate or contradicted by contemporary European descriptions. This lacuna in the written evidence highlights the importance of the concrete archaeological evidence provided by spolia. The Badi‘ spolia shows the exquisite finesse of the marble carving produced for Ahmad al-Mansur, a tradition that does not survive into later centuries. The spolia also illustrates the surprising eclecticism of sixteenth-century architecture in Morocco. The mixture of styles is tangible proof of the cosmopolitan and Turcophile character of Ahmad al-Mansur’s court. The appearance of the spolia even in small towns such as Safi and Sefrou[65] indicates the truth behind al-Ifrani’s comment that there was not a town in Morocco that did not receive debris from the Badi‘. Finally, the preservation and reuse of architectural elements, albeit haphazard, is an aspect of the later ‘Alawi dynasty’s admiration of the ‘golden age’ of Marrakesh under Ahmad al-Mansur, evident in the major buildings of all the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century sultans.

NOTES

1 The principal Arabic source on the palace is 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Fishtali's *Manahil al-safa' fi akhbar al-muluk al-shurafa'*, which is quoted by the 'Alawi historian al-Ifrani in *Nuzhat al-hadi*; see al-Ifrani 1889: 179–95; Aimel 1918; de Castries 1906–23, vol. IV: 570–77; Deverdun 1956: 235–37; Deverdun 1959–66: 392–401, 465–74; Koehler 1940; Marçais 1927, vol. II: 711–13; Marçais 1954: 395–96; Meunier 1957; Tazi 1977.

2 Al-Fishtali, quoted in al-Ifrani 1889: 180, 261.

3 De Castries 1905–9, vol. II: 338, n. 7; de Castries 1906–23, vol. IV: 574.

4 De Castries 1906–23, vol. IV: 574, quotes Michel de Montaigne's *Journal de Voyage*, ed. Louis Lautrey (Paris, 1906): 398–99.

5 De Castries 1918–35, vol. II: 329, quoting Robert C. (surname unknown), *A True Historicall Discourse of Muley Hamets rising to the three Kingdomes of Moruecos, Fez and Sus* (London, 1609).

6 De Castries 1918–35, vol. I: 433, 436; vol. II: 168–70, 269.

7 Al-Ifrani 1889: 180, 190, 303; Deverdun 1956: 392–93.

8 Al-Ifrani 1889: 193.

9 Smith 1704: 34–37, quoted in de Castries 1918–35, vol. II: 268; Deverdun 1959–66, vol. I: 472.

10 Deverdun 1959–66, vol. I: 471, refers to da Cunha 1864: 106 and Goulven 1924; see also Tazi 1977: 24.

11 Al-Nasiri 1956, vol. VII: 46–50; Deverdun 1959–66, vol. I: 467–71; Tazi 1977: 22–24, 56–59.

12 De Castries 1922–31, vol. II: 426, 430, 432; Deverdun 1959–66, vol. I: 471, n. 21. Höst reported in the 1760s that it took 50 and a half hours to travel (presumably on horseback) from Marrakesh to Safi, and 18 hours from Sale to Meknes: see Höst 2002: 53–56.

13 De Castries 1922–31, vol. IV: 385.

14 Kampffmeyer 1908: 182–89; see opposite p. 186 for photograph.

15 Al-Ifrani 1889: 193; de Castries 1906–23, vol. IV: 577; Lévi-Provençal 1991: 123; Marçais 1954: 193.

16 Al-Ifrani found that the numerical *abjad* reading of the name of the Badi' palace coincided with the number of years between its completion and demolition in 1707–8, that is 117. Lévi-Provençal 1991: 129–30 criticises al-Ifrani's 'mania for chronograms and pseudo-coincidences'.

17 Deverdun 1959–66, vol. I: 471–72.

18 Tazi 1977: 60.

19 Deverdun 1959–66, vol. II: 324, quoting Del Puerto 1708: 79.

20 Deverdun 1959–66, vol. I: 472. For Cairo see Rabat 1995: 245.

21 Höst 1781: 85, quoted by Kampffmeyer 1908: 187.

22 Lévi-Provençal 1991: 95, refers to Akansus 1918, vol. I: 159–68; al-Fishtali quoted in al-Ifrani 1889: 203–9; al-Nasiri 1956, vol. VIII: 56, 67.

23 Al-Nasiri 1956, vol. VII: 193–94; Deverdun 1959–66, vol. I: 473, 480.

24 Translation by Nadia Erzini. Lévi-Provençal 1991: 194–95 quotes his manuscript copy (which he called the Salé copy) of Abu'l-Qasim al-Zayyani, *Al-Turjman al-mu'rib 'an duwal al-mashriq wa'l-maghrib*, Sa'dian section, fol. 11v.

25 For the site plan, see Meunier 1957: Fig. 4.

26 E.g. the description of Father Matias de San Francisco, *Relación del viaje espiritual…* (Madrid, 1644): 52, 76 etc., quoted in Koehler 1940: 12–13. See also Del Puerto 1708: 368–69; de Castries 1906–3, vol. IV: 576.

27 Golius's plan is reproduced in Windus 1725: 222, where it is erroneously identified as the palace of Fez.

28 Koehler 1937. The plan is reproduced in Koehler 1940: Fig. 2.

29 Allain 1956 documented the Sa'dian remains in the limestone quarries at Imi N'Tala in the Atlas Mountains near Marrakesh and compared them to the capitals and columns found during his excavations in the Zujaj gardens alongside the Badi‘ palace. These can still be seen at the site. For a marble version of the monumental capital, see Allain 1956: Pl. IVb; for monolithic sandstone triple capitals at the quarry and at the Badi‘ palace, see Pls IIIb, IIIc. For a clearer illustration, see Paccard 1979, vol. II: 56, Figs 3, 4; Tazi 1977: 50–52.

30 Al-Fishtali termed it *rukham mujazza'*, veined or coloured marble: al-Ifrani 1889: 181, quoted by de Castries 1906–23, vol. IV: 574.

31 Marçais 1927, vol. II: 751–52; Marçais 1954: 199–200, Fig. 1.

32 Mocquet 1617; de Castries 1905–9, vol. II: 405.

33 Aimel 1918: 55, 60–61; Deverdun 1959–66: Pl. XLIVb.

34 Bel 1919: 54. Paccard 1979, vol. II: 58–59 documents the Moroccan marble quarries used in recent decades, but there seems to be no pure white marble.

35 Columns with their shafts entirely carved can be seen on early Sa'dian buildings of Sultan 'Abdallah al-Ghalib in Marrakesh: the Ibn Yusuf madrasa, the Mawasin mosque, and the mausoleum of Sidi Yusuf ibn 'Ali.

36 De Castries 1921b.

37 Marçais 1927, vol. II: 331, 700, 742, 903–4 and Figs 453, 454, 501. Marçais also pointed out that it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between Italian marble capitals and local copies in stone.

38 Al-Ifrani 1889: 261; Marçais 1927, vol. II: 699–702.

39 See al-Fishtali quoted in al-Ifrani 1889: 195–99; de Castries 1921c: 231–52; Deverdun 1959–66, vol. I: 441–49; El Moudden 1992: 84, 87–89, 126, 142–43; al-Tamgruti 1929: 90.

40 Marçais 1927, vol. II: 713, 742, 753. Marçais had contradictory opinions about Sa'dian architecture, describing it both as a period of decadence and a renaissance; his chapter on the Sa'dian and 'Alawi period is relatively short given the number of buildings preserved.

41 Barrucand 1985: 69, 88; Barrucand 1989: Pl. 48, Fig. e. See also Paccard 1979, vol. II: 47, Fig. 5.

42 Barrucand 1989: Pls 48, Fig. c, e, 100, 101.

43 Barrucand 1976: Pl. 35 illustrates the Dar al-Madrasa, Dar al-Sultan, portico of Qubba of Mawlay ʻAbd al-Rahman with at least two columns half fluted and half Italianate acanthus. She also published a detail of the Italian Renaissance style column showing the acanthus carving (Figs 102, 105).

44 Paccard 1979, vol. II: 52, Fig. 4.

45 Barrucand 1976: Figs 100, 101. It is not clear whether Barrucand identified these panels as spolia from the Badiʻ palace.

46 Barrucand 1985: Pl. IX, Figs 1, 2.

47 Al-Qadiri 1981: 158–62; al-Kittani 1897: 178–79; Salmon 1905: 418; al-Nasiri 1956, vol. VII: 98–99.

48 Al-Kittani 1897: 178–79; Salmon 1905: 418; al-Nasiri 1956, vol. VII: 98–99.

49 For illustration see Tazi 1977: 53–54.

50 Tazi 1972–73, vol. II: 553–54, illustrated on 334–36; also illustrated in Tazi 1960: 27. The columns are inscribed with the name of the Marinid sultan Abu Faris ʻAbd al-ʻAziz and the date 770/1368–69, and the room is known to have been rebuilt by the Saʻdian sultan ʻAbdallah al-Ghalib in 970/1562–63. It is possible that the *muqarnas* capitals and arches are early Saʻdian work, incorporating earlier columns.

51 Deverdun 1956: 183–86.

52 Deverdun 1959–66, vol. I: 474; vol. II: Pl. XLIVa. The early twentieth-century historian Ibn al-Muwaqqit 1917–18, vol. II: 185–87 refers to Ismaʻil using Badiʻ spolia to restore monuments in Marrakesh.

53 Paccard 1979, vol. II: 44, Figs 1, 2.

54 Horne 1925: 89.

55 Paccard 1979, vol. II: 45, Fig. 4.

56 Paccard 1979, vol. II: 20–21, Figs 1–3.

57 Horne 1925: 89, Pl. 43.

58 Marçais 1954: 397.

59 Ricard 1930: 273–74; Allain 1956: 112.

60 Al-Nasiri 1956, vol. VIII: 172; Bel 1917: 12. Al-Nasiri also mentions that Sulayman rebuilt the Great Mosque of Sefrou. The fountain basin in the courtyard of the Sefrou mosque stood until recently on a makeshift pedestal, made of an upturned marble capital in the Ottoman-Turkish style, a hole through the centre of which allowed piped water to reach the fountain basin. The capital is now in the Luqash Madrasa Museum in Tetuan. It would be interesting to examine the other mosques and tombs built by Sulayman for Badiʻ palace spolia.

61 A photograph of the *mihrab* of the Jamaʻ al-Rasif appears in Sijelmassi 1991: 95, but there is no comment on the columns or the inscription.

62 Rousseau and Doutté 1925: Pls LVIII–LXII.

63 Al-Nasiri 1956, vol. VIII: 183.

64 Al-Kittani 1897: 182–83.

65 See Kampffmeyer 1908; Al-Nasiri 1956, vol. VIII: 172; also see above n. 60.

PART 6

CERAMIC TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

19

GLAZE-DECORATED UNGLAZED WARES

OLIVER WATSON

A fragmentary bowl or lower part of a bottle found in excavations at Raqqa and now in the National Museum in Damascus has received more attention than it appears at first to warrant (Fig. 19.1).[1] Made of common unglazed clay, formed by moulding and with minimal decoration, it would seem to belong to the cheaper and less interesting end of ceramic production. Unglazed wares form the vastly greater bulk of ceramic production in medieval and pre-modern times, and moulding is a technique specifically developed to allow multiple production of decorated wares which would be too laborious and expensive to do individually by hand. The early Abbasid period in Raqqa saw a great development of elaborate mould-decorated wares of much greater sophistication than this bowl.[2] So why the attention? The decoration of the piece includes a simple rosette with palmette finials on the base, and a line of inscription round the upper part of the surviving wall. It is of course the inscription that provides the interest:

من عمل ابرهيم النصراني مما (عمل ب)الحيرة
(لـ)لامير سليمن (ب)ن امير المومنين

'Made by Ibrahim the Christian, made at al-Hira for the Amir Sulayman, son of the Commander of the Believers.'

Michael Meinecke commented on the identity of this individual:

> Thus this bowl was commissioned by the son of a ruling caliph, a certain prince Sulaiman, who perhaps was the son of the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik (685–705). Considering the find spot, however, an identification with the son of the Abbasid caliph

> al-Mansur (754–75) of the same name seems more likely, as he founded the new city Rafiqa near Raqqa in 772. It is plausible that al-Mansur in the course of his extensive building activities erected a palace for his son, possibly in the area of the north wall, where this bowl was found. If this is so, the vessel dates from between 772 and 775 (death of al-Mansur).[3]

This presents us with a considerable puzzle. Why for such a modest object do we find a patron at the highest social level – the son of the caliph? And why, when Raqqa was clearly producing top-quality decorated unglazed wares, was this piece brought the 650km upstream from al-Hira in lower Iraq to Raqqa?[4] Did this piece have some special value at the time, which we cannot now easily appreciate?

The contemporary 'value' of objects is one of the most obscure aspects of our understanding of the things of the past, even the relatively recent past. Yet it is the value that would have been the first consideration of the potential owners of such things, just as it is to us today. Is it 'worth it'? Can I afford it? For the same money would I like something else? Do I really need it? Do I have to have it? We have virtually no data with which to start exploring this topic – no price lists, no salary and wage charts, no *What Ceramic?* or *Which Metalwork?* magazines. We can find documentation of the monetary

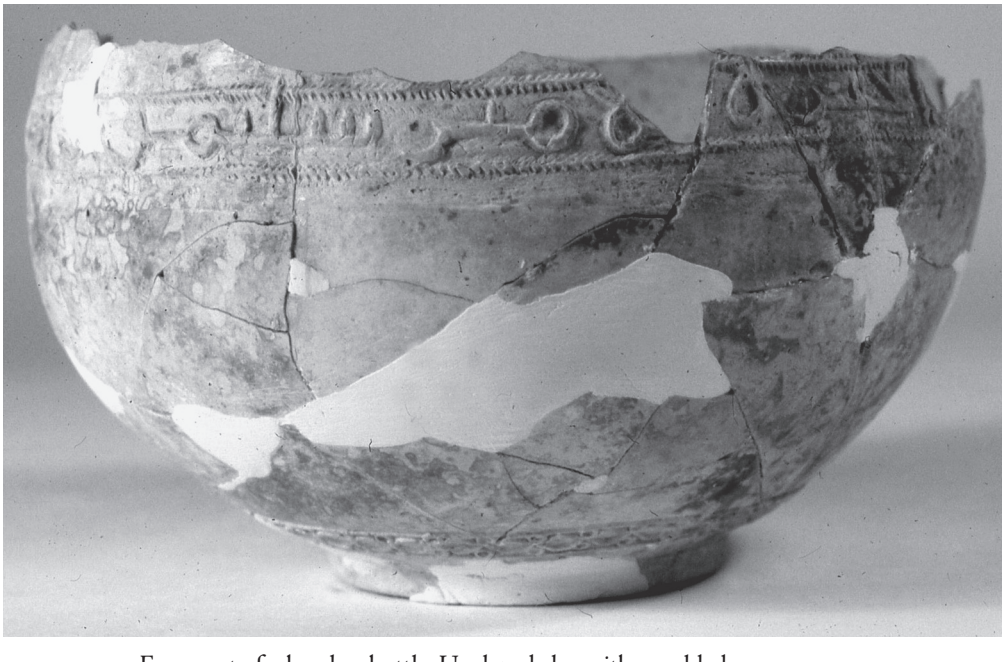

FIG. 19.1 Fragment of a bowl or bottle. Unglazed clay with moulded decoration. Found in Raqqa. Height 7.5cm; diameter 12.2cm. National Museum, Damascus, no A17261.

cost (the price) or the social value (the 'esteem') of only a vanishingly small number of the things from the Islamic past that have come down to us.[5] Are we talking dinars? Dirhams? *Fulus*? What percentage of the income of the intended purchaser would this be? We do not even know the relative values within classes (how much more expensive are glazed pots than unglazed ones?) or between classes (are metal objects much more expensive than ceramics? By how much?). We can be in danger of making assumptions that are as unwarranted as they are implicit and unexamined, such as the presumption that the best-quality wares of all materials operate at the same social level: top-quality ceramics at the same social level as top-quality metalwork, an assumption that really begs the question.[6]

Obvious rules-of-thumb can help to navigate this difficult terrain. Perhaps the most basic and most reliable is that the value of an object, both in price and esteem, depends directly on two factors: the quality and expense of its materials; and the time and skill spent in the making. Gold is obviously more expensive than clay or brass, and we are able to tell that one ceramic vase or metal ewer is made with more refined materials (both more expensive and involving more time in the preparation) and greater skill than another. Skill is a scarce resource and requires investment of time in training as well as in subsequent making. It is fair to assume that the social position of an object is directly related to its expense.[7] So, bearing all this in mind, how do we explain the Raqqa bowl?

There exist two wares which share somewhat in this same puzzle – wares separated by several centuries but united in a particular and peculiar decorative technique: one made in lower Iraq in the ninth century, the other in central Iran in the late twelfth. Both are essentially and evidently unglazed wares – bottles and jugs – but both are curiously decorated with patterns executed in glaze or glaze-like techniques, applied directly to the clay fabric. The first ware is decorated mostly in blue on the unglazed body, in a style identical to the well-known Abbasid blue-on-white ware; the second is decorated in a technique and style identical to the *mina'i* overglaze enamel technique of Kashan in the pre-Mongol period, but on an unglazed clay body.

The key factor about these two wares is that they are in essence fine unglazed pottery, and seek to preserve the clay's characteristic qualities: lightweight vessels for drinking or pouring liquids, which cool the contents by evaporation from the porous surface. In this respect they differ markedly from other early Islamic partially glazed wares such as 'Coptic glazed ware' and other members of the yellow-glazed family.[8] In these, the application of different colours of glaze provides a vivid polychrome decoration, and the lack of an overall glaze covering avoids the blurring of colours in the firing. The completely glazed interiors of the closed forms in these techniques demonstrate clearly that they were not conceived of as a decorated unglazed ware.

The interest of the two wares discussed here is that they appear to be common unglazed pottery, but that the decoration of each is in a technique and a style identical to that of the highest quality of contemporary glazed ware: 'elite' decoration applied to the commonest (and, by assumption, the cheapest) of vessel types.

NINTH-CENTURY ABBASID IRAQI GLAZE-DECORATED WARES

First found at Samarra and published in Sarre's *Die Keramik von Samarra* in 1925 are a small group of sherds apparently in the standard unglazed fine-ware fabric but decorated with trails of coloured glaze (blue and orange, less commonly green) in geometric patterns of some elaboration, and with Kufic or kufesque inscriptions.[9] The glazes are rich and shiny and stand in relatively thick relief on the clay surface, yet they are well behaved, not running even when on the vertical wall of a large cylindrical vessel, and with only a very mild tendency to blur when the two different colours are in contact. Otherwise, fine lines and rows of dots are precisely delineated. The designs are strongly reminiscent of those on the more familiar Basran blue-on-white wares.[10]

Within only a few years of Sarre's publication a larger group of pieces in a similar technique were published by Raymond Koechlin, from finds by the French archaeological mission in Susa, and named by him 'céramique à décor émaillé sur cru'.[11] These differed somewhat from the Samarra finds by being rather sparsely decorated with blue glaze trailing alone, and predominantly with inscriptions (Fig. 19.2; Plates 13 and 14). The inscriptions, where legible, are appropriate for the assumed function of the jugs and bottles that make up the greater part of the group – a common phrase being *ashrab hanian*, drink with pleasure.

اشرب هنيئا

The relationship in style and content with inscriptions on the Abbasid blue-on-white wares remains striking.[12]

There are a number of observations that can be made about these Abbasid 'glaze-decorated' wares as a group. First that the clay fabric looks similar or identical to that of other unglazed wares. Second that the range of shapes on which they are found also corresponds to that of unglazed wares – ewers, bottles and jugs. Third that, in contrast, the patterns are identical to many of those on ninth-century Basran blue-on-white ware which is fully glazed and is predominantly made up of bowls or other open forms. The form of Kufic is identical to that on the blue-on-white wares, as are the decorative patterns of double-lined borders containing dots or hatching, palmette sprays and the like.

Given these similarities it is difficult to imagine that both types were not made by the same potters. Of all the known types of glazed ceramics from the early Abbasid period in any of the Islamic lands, the blue-on-white wares and the related lustre-decorated wares are unique in having decoration in cobalt blue, a significant point that unites them with the ware under discussion. Furthermore, the lustre and blue-on-white wares are believed to have been made by the same potters – probably in Basra – as they share the same vessel shapes, the same clay fabric and the same glazes. We must presume, therefore, that our glaze-decorated wares were also made in the same workshops. We can explain the difference in characteristic vessel shapes by different function: unglazed clay is not suitable for bowls and dishes which are largely destined for the serving and consumption of food, but is ideal as a lightweight container for drink. There is another difference, however, which presents more of a conundrum. The fabric of the unglazed pieces is very different to that of the glazed. The blue-on-white and lustrewares are invariably made with a distinctive 'Basra' clay: finely levigated, pale yellow in colour, often with a noticeable sparse scatter of large quartz inclusions. The glaze-decorated ware, however, is made from a fine grey fabric typical of unglazed wares, quite distinct

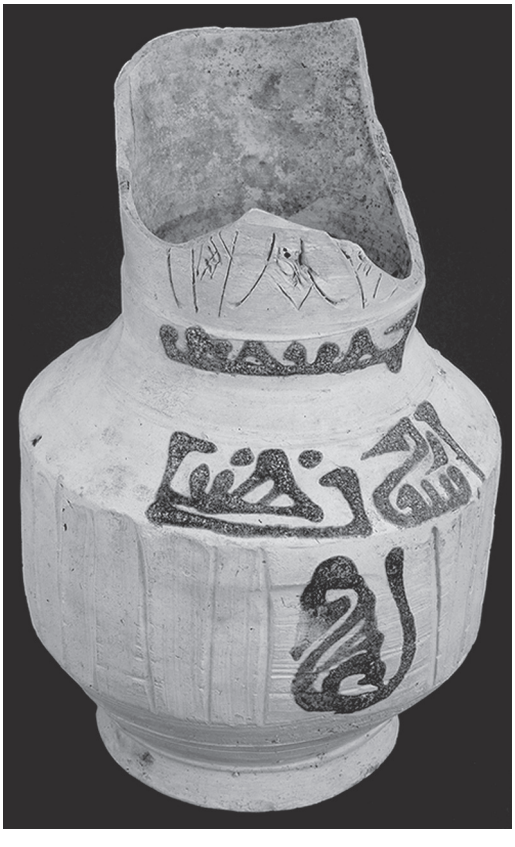

FIG. 19.2 Jug, unglazed clay, with painted decoration in blue glaze. Found at Susa. Height 20cm, diameter 8.7cm. Louvre Museum, Paris, no MAO S 525.

from the 'Basra' body. Why did the potters of the most sophisticated ceramic products of their time – wares that by virtue of their quality were traded across the Islamic world and beyond – waste their time decorating common unglazed pottery?

PRE-MONGOL IRANIAN GLAZE-DECORATED WARE (LATE TWELFTH CENTURY)

A jug in the Parrish-Watson Collection (Fig. 19.3) was catalogued by Meyer Riefstahl in 1922, who described it thus:

> This pitcher is of a very rare technique. The polychrome ornamentation in slightly raised relief is not shown against the usual glazed background, in which the clay of the body is covered by a slip or by a white or coloured glaze. The background is the grayish clay of the body without any embellishment or glazing. Only the ornamentation is enameled. In porcelain we would call this technique 'enameled on biscuit'. The only other specimen known to us is a very similar pitcher at the Metropolitan Museum of Art…[13]

We can now add a number of other pieces to this rare group: a jug in Berlin;[14] two jugs in the Seattle Art Museum;[15] one at Shangri La in Hawaii;[16] a jug formerly in the Eumorphopoulos Collection;[17] and another in a private collection.[18] All of these share the same basic form, of a round-bodied jug with a wide tall neck. Of different shape is a jug

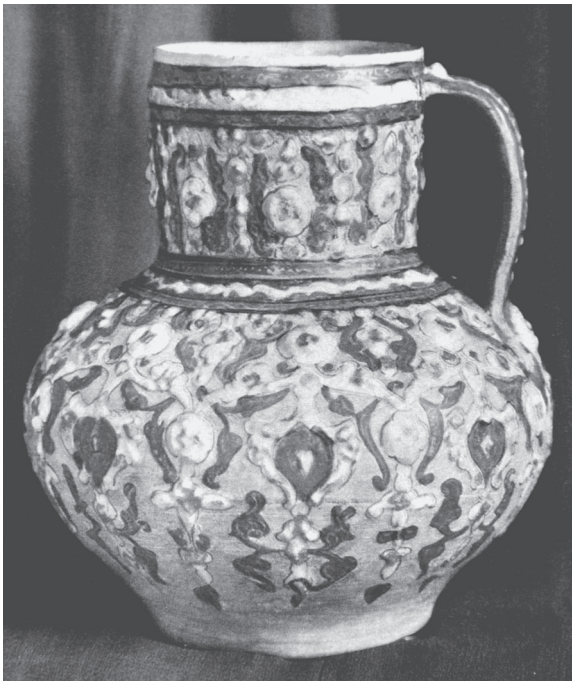

FIG. 19.3 Jug, formerly in the Parrish-Watson Collection. Unglazed clay, with painted decoration in coloured glazes. Height 16.2cm. After Riefstahl (1922, no 36).

in the Louvre (Plate 15),[19] with a tall narrow neck, and a sherd in the Berlin collection showing yet another form of articulated neck.[20] The decoration varies in its motifs, but the technique is absolutely the same as the well-known overglaze enamel decoration of *mina'i* wares of Kashan, dating from the last quarter of the twelfth century.[21] The enamel colours in white, blue or turquoise are applied directly to the body to form the main motifs, and these may then be outlined in red or black enamel and enhanced with gold leaf. On several examples there are raised designs in 'piped' clay or elaborate applied bosses with pierced decoration to which the colours and gilding are applied. In some the decoration is rather sparse, in others more elaborate and covering more of the vessel with a network of patterns. At first sight these pieces appear to be conventional *mina'i* vessels, but closer examination reveals not only that the designs are on an unglazed ground, but that this ground is a grey clay body, quite different from the white fritware from which the Kashan *mina'i* pieces are always made. The similarities of the technique make it certain that the glaze-decorated wares were also part of the output of the Kashan potters, who appear to have had a monopoly on the making of *mina'i* ware.

The Kashan potters made the most sophisticated, highest-quality and hence most expensive wares of the period, and *mina'i*, given its complexities, probably ranked with lustre as the most desirable. These products were widely traded, perhaps not to the same extent as the Abbasid lustre and blue-on-white wares, but certainly as far as Afghanistan and Central Asia in the east and Syria and Egypt in the west.[22] We may pose the same question as before: why did potters making the highest-quality luxury wares spend time decorating vessels of common unglazed clay?

DISCUSSION

The similarities between these two glaze-decorated wares are striking, separated as they are by three centuries. To add to the puzzle, we might make the following observation. It is highly likely in the case of the Abbasid ware and virtually certain in the case of the pre-Mongol ware that the decoration was applied in a second firing to an already-fired vessel. While overall glazes were regularly 'raw fired' – that is, applied to an unfired vessel where body and glaze would be fired at the same time – it would be much riskier to apply a few small patches of thick glaze to areas of a thin unfired clay vessel, in the hope of maturing both body and glaze together without detriment to one or the other. It is far safer to decorate fired vessels, as was certainly the case with the pre-Mongol 'enamelled on biscuit' ware. Enamel colours were fixed in a second firing at a lower temperature than the first firing of the pot itself. The paradox is that the requirement for two firings would greatly increase the cost of manufacture – fuel for firing being

the most significant of the potters' costs, as well as the additional resources needed for loading and unloading the kilns, with the attendant risk of breakage.

We might here profitably return to considering the Raqqa bowl, for there is one issue we have not explored which might explain its curious history. Vera Tamari, in a discussion of Abbasid white-glazed wares, quotes a verse by the contemporary ninth-century poet al-Jahiz talking of the potters of Basra: 'The whiteness of the vessels and the delicious taste of water contained in their jars is an indication of the good quality of their clay. Its colour seems as if it has been moulded out of an egg-yolk.'[23]

The reference to taste provides the clue. One of the advantages of glass and glazed pottery is that they are (or should be) inert, providing a clean and hygienic container that does not contaminate the contents. In contrast, unglazed pottery usually has a considerable impact, imparting a strong taste of 'clay' to any liquids it holds. Al-Jahiz refers not to the quality of Basran water, which has nothing to do with the potters, but the good taste which their clay gives to the water. This is the effect of an unglazed vessel, and his comment on colour must refer to the colour of an unglazed clay, not to a glaze colour.

The valuing of special clays for beneficial properties beyond the purely functional has been recorded in many cultures. The perceived properties are benefits to health, either directly in curing or preventing disease or indirectly in revealing the presence of poisons. In the Islamic world, for example, the Ottomans revived the antique practice of quarrying 'terra lemnia' and had special vessels made with stamps which indicated the authentic origin of this beneficial material which had been valued over centuries;[24] medieval written sources cite similar examples.[25] Health and taste were connected: while an unpleasant flavour might conceivably do good, a good flavour could only be beneficial. The delight in the flavour given to water by certain clays and the health benefits that came from drinking it led to the clay itself being consumed, either 'raw' or as powder made from broken vessels. In Europe, vessels made from special clays figured in the *Wunderkammers* of royal potentates, and in seventeenth-century Spain the fashion for geophagy – the eating of clay – even made it profitable to import elaborate vessels of fragile polished earthenware from distant Mexico – vessels so treasured that they featured regularly in still-life paintings of the period.[26]

We can therefore place the Raqqa bowl in a different light, as an exemplar of a cultural constant seen over continents and through centuries, valued not so much for its workmanship or high refinement of material but for the effect on its contents.[27] We posit a famous clay, in this case from al-Hira, renowned for the taste and possibly for the health benefits it imparts. We can imagine Amir Sulayman requesting that vessels of this clay be ordered for a special event – a grand party he is throwing in Raqqa, say – at which he wants to impress his guests with the best to be had, all the better if from

a distant source. The famous clay is worked by a known potter, signalled on the vessel by his signature. The special order by Amir Sulayman – also signalled in the inscription – is for a large party, hence moulded decoration allows the quick production of dozens if not hundreds of identical pieces. The guests drink (in this scenario probably wine not water, but the effect on the taste is the same), each aware of the special nature of the piece, and the taste and generosity of the patron in commissioning the vessels from so far afield. Sulayman's reputation as a *bon vivant* and generous host is confirmed.[28]

This scenario provides a satisfying rationale for our other two wares. The apparently common unglazed vessels are decorated with the most expensive and sophisticated ceramic techniques of their time, not to enhance the expense of a common object but to highlight the special nature of an uncommon and valued material, one whose special characteristics are only experienced in use, not simply by looking. This enhancement of course added to the pot's desirability and its price. Such 'packaging' was doubtless used to signal to customers the elevated status of the otherwise common-looking ware – a signal that was as intelligible to the purchasers in the bazaars of medieval Iraq or Iran as it is to us today.

NOTES

1 Al-'Ush 1960: Pl. 1, Fig. 9; Pl. 2, Fig. 8; Pl. 15, Fig. 22; al-'Ush 1963: 37, Pl. 11, no 56; Grohman 1971: 73, 86, Fig. 54, Pl. 14: 2; *Arts of Islam* 1976 1976: no 250; Damascus 1980: 160, Fig. 27; Meinecke 1982: no 252; Washington 1985: no 246; Gonella 1999: 57–58; Haase 2003: 108, no 46; Heidemann 2003: 33–34; Heidemann 2006: 40, n. 49.

2 Gonella 1999; Watson 2004: no Aa1.

3 Michael Meinecke in Washington 1985: no 264.

4 Its provenance from al-Hira is underlined by the excavation there of sherds of moulded ware in very similar style, including two fragments from a vessel with an identical form of inscription, one of which bears the same name 'Ibrahim', see Rice 1934: Fig. 18; these sherds are now held by the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

5 Some valuations of silverware and Chinese and Iznik pottery are found in Ottoman inventories but are difficult to interpret in the absence of precise identification of the type or quality of objects listed. It is clear, unsurprisingly, that silver is the most costly, followed by Chinese, with Iznik ranked as the least valuable. However, the different inventories give widely varying ranges of price differentials, leading Rogers (1986: 129) to surmise – though without any evidence – that 'So great is the difference in price between Iznik and porcelain that the Iznik pottery must mostly have been cracked, chipped or broken.' See also Atasoy and Raby 1989, especially 25–29.

6 An assumption reinforced by museum displays, where works in different materials are usually displayed alongside each other, with little attempt to signal their different social standing.

7 'Kitsch' or expensive vulgarity is a notion where the display of wealth and skill is a sign not of taste but of lack of it, and demonstrates in the eyes of some a failure of social understanding or betrays an inferior social position. This is not an issue found in the art of medieval societies generally, nor yet has it been clearly identified in the pre-modern Islamic world, though it is apparent, for example, in Ming China: see Clunas 1991. It reflects the concerns of societies where old elites face challenges from the *nouveau riche*, or where industrialisation undermines the scarcity of previously hand-worked and scarce products.

8 Whitcomb 1989; Watson 1999: 81–82. For a colour illustration of 'Coptic glazed ware' see Allan 1991a: no 1. For a closed form with overall internal glaze, see Lane 1947: Pl. 7a.

9 Sarre 1925: 29–31, Texttafel A1, B2, and C1&3, Tafel VII–VIII; also Klein et al. 1973: no 22.

10 See, for example, Tamari 1995, especially Figs 8 and 18.

11 Koechlin 1928: 54–57, nos 72–81, Pl. X. The very large group later published by Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (1974: 136–42, Pls XXIX–XXX) stands in contrast to the few sherds from Samarra: they are predominantly decorated with calligraphic patterns in blue, with few examples of other colours or of geometric patterns. Rosen-Ayalon, classifying them as 'céramique non-glacée, à décor glacée', considers that they are a turning-point between unglazed and glazed wares. It is much more probable, however, that they derive from the Basran glazed ware than that they are precursors to it. They are predominantly found in Susa level 1, suggesting to her a date in the tenth century and later, though these dates are subject to revision. See also Joel 2005: nos 50ff.

12 See, for example, Tamari 1995, especially Figs 13, 23–24.

13 Riefstahl 1922: 183, no 36, and Fig. 61. The current whereabouts of the Parrish-Watson piece is not known; the piece in the Metropolitan Museum of Art has acc. no 15.72.1.

14 Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin, no I.1593 (unpublished).

15 Seattle Art Museum, nos 40.17 and 59.112 (unpublished).

16 Shangri La, Hawaii, no 48.306 (unpublished).

17 Hobson 1928: F.398, Pl. 65.

18 Soustiel 1985: no 119.

19 Louvre Museum, MAO 414 (unpublished).

20 Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin, no I.2336 (unpublished).

21 See Watson 2004, Sect. P: 362–71.

22 For Kashan ware in the east, see Scerrato 1959; Auboyer 1968: Pl. 116; Shishkina 1992: nos 238–43, col. pl. p. 71. For Kashan ware in Arab lands, see especially Riis 1957, categories A II a-b, and Figs 367–86. Kashan sherds are frequently found among collections of Fustat material. George Scanlon reports 'quite a few' sherds of Iranian lustre in the later Fustat 'mounds': see Scanlon 1971: 233.

23 Tamari 1995: 137, referencing al-Jahiz 1979: 141.

24 Raby 1995.

25 Milwright 1999: 508 and n. 33.

26 Rührdanz 2009a; Rührdanz 2009b; Gavin 2003: 189–91. See also http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/ceramics/object_stories/bucaros/index.html (accessed February 2012).

27 While the Raqqa bowl is not particularly distinguished in its material from other fine unglazed wares, closer inspection of the Samarra sherds suggests that they are of an unusually finely prepared and fine-coloured clay. It is difficult to judge the quality of the clay of the later Iranian enamel-decorated wares, given the lack of fragments.

28 Milwright 1999: 506 gives references to the wares ordered by the Sultan of Yemen in 794/1392 for a feast to celebrate the circumcision of his sons. Among other things, he ordered a variety of pottery including 'five hundred dishes of Chinese porcelain [*sahn al-sin*], Persian ware [*qashani*], Zabid earthenware [*fakhkhar al-zabidi*], vessels of numerous shapes and decorations, 'Cairo-made' wares [*al-qahiriyya*], and 'Shayzar-made' wares [*al-shayzariyya*]'.

20

PEARL CUPS LIKE THE MOON: THE ABBASID RECEPTION OF CHINESE CERAMICS AND THE BELITUNG SHIPWRECK

JESSICA HALLETT

Some time at the end of the eighth century, the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (r.786–809), one of the famous protagonists of *One Thousand and One Nights*, received a remarkable and surprising gift.[1] Sent from 'Ali ibn 'Isa, the governor of Khurasan (in northeast Iran), it comprised 'twenty pieces of imperial China-ware (*chini faghfuri*), including bowls, cups and half-cups, the like of which had never been seen at a caliph's court before', along with some two thousand other pieces not described.[2] The gift clearly included exceptional items that were probably acquired, as the text implies, via the Central Asian land route from China, which passed through northeast Iran at this time.

The distinction given to the select group of *chini faghfuri* has been interpreted as distinguishing finer wares from common export wares or porcelain from stoneware.[3] The term *faghfuri* referred initially to the emperor of China and by association came to be used as the generic name for Chinese ceramics. However, it does not necessarily denote 'porcelain', and probably referred to a type of Tang stoneware made in northern China, within easy access of the Silk Road.[4] Possible candidates for inclusion in the gift are the fine ceramic wares made at the Xing and Ding kilns, characterised by hard, white bodies covered with a transparent glaze.[5]

It is obvious, when faced with the limited range of pottery available in Iraq in the eighth century, why Harun al-Rashid and his court would have been so impressed with the governor's Chinese offerings. The pottery repertoire of the first two centuries of Islam was characterised by an absence of mass-produced, extensively traded fine wares, owing to the temporary destruction of the commercial system in the Mediterranean and Levant. In

the eastern part of the Islamic empire, in Iraq and Iran, the local pottery industry evolved from the ancient Mesopotamian ceramic tradition in which plain pottery predominated, occasionally with monochrome glazes and applied surface decoration. Vessel shapes consisted mainly of small bowls, tall jars and flat plates. Glazes, when present, were of an alkaline composition (with soda or lime added as a flux or fusing material), usually thick and uneven, and tinted turquoise with the addition of copper.

Two important developments occurred in the eighth century, namely the production of a new type of turquoise-glazed storage jar with elaborate applied decoration, along with a variety of fine, relief-moulded tablewares. These were decorated to imitate prestigious metal vessels and were often covered with a dark-green glaze to which lead had been added as a flux.[6] But even the finest of these wares rarely, if ever, achieved a level of sophistication worthy of a caliph's table.

Set against this background, Chinese ceramics offered a startling and dramatic contrast and had a profound influence on Abbasid taste. Increased demand for these imports inspired Iraqi potters to experiment with new techniques, shapes and designs to produce imitations for a wider market. Their innovative tablewares, which combined the esteemed qualities of Chinese pottery with Islamic colour and decoration, achieved widespread commercial success and were highly sought after by the affluent mercantile classes across the vast Abbasid empire (Fig. 20.1).

It is tempting to posit a central role for Harun al-Rashid and his direct royal command behind these remarkable developments. The main impetus, however, was almost certainly international maritime trade and the ensuing arrival via the overseas route of much larger numbers of Chinese wares, which came to be known outside court circles. A shipwreck discovered recently near Belitung Island, southeast of Sumatra, is a crucial element in this story, as it offers tangible evidence of the scope of the long-distance ceramic trade at this time and reveals how Islamic merchants spurred innovation in Iraq's ceramic industry.[7]

The ship has a sewn hull made from East African timber and was almost certainly built somewhere on the Arabian Sea, and was on its return journey from China when it was lost. Its excavated cargo comprises almost exclusively Chinese items, mainly precious-metal objects, bullion and 25 metric tons of glazed ceramics (98 per cent of the 60,000 artefacts recovered), providing a dramatic indication of the extent of mass production under the Tang for the export market. The dhow also offers conclusive evidence of the existence of West Asian traders in the South China Sea in the ninth century, hinted at by both Chinese and Arabic sources. Many questions, however, remain to be resolved, such as the precise date of its sailing (whether in the late 820s or a couple of decades later), its immediate destination (whether Java or Sumatra), as well as the identity of its passengers and crew, along with the intended consumers of its cargo.

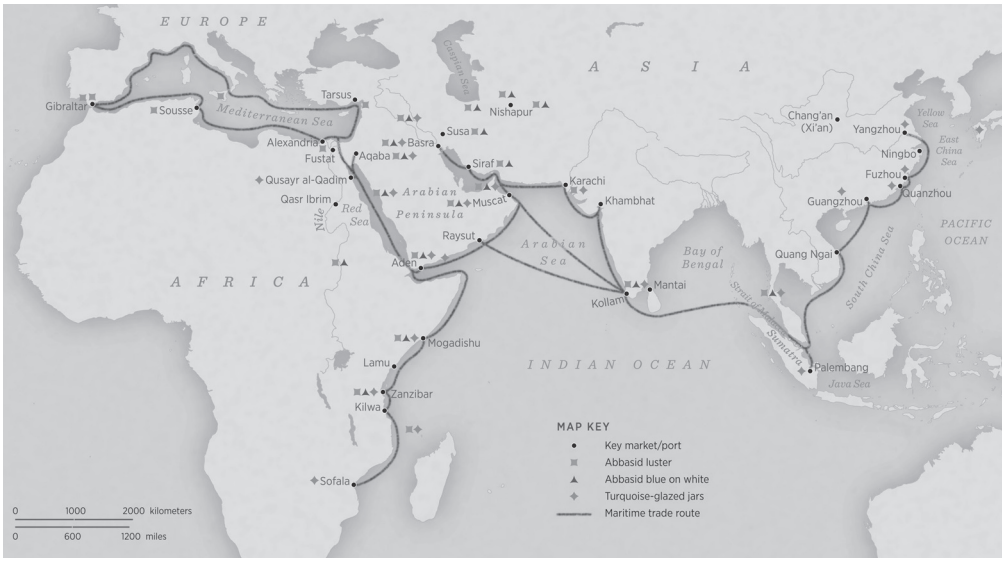

FIG. 20.1 Map of principal sites where Abbasid ceramics have been found.

Nevertheless, its ceramic contents are extremely enlightening on the composition of the long-distance maritime trade, and the dynamic nature of exchange between China and West Asia at this time. The vast bulk of its glazed wares consist of iron-decorated stonewares from the kilns at Changsha, small quantities of green-glazed wares from Zhejiang, large storage jars from Guangzhou, high-quality white-glazed stonewares from Hebei and Henan, and white- and green-splashed stoneware recently confirmed to be from Gongxian.[8] The latter whitewares were particularly important, as we shall see, for the rise of the new Iraqi pottery industry.

CHINESE INFLUENCE

From the archaeological record provided by sites in Syria, Iraq and Iran, it seems that Iraqi potters responded swiftly to the arrival of Chinese whitewares by way of the maritime route.[9] Experimentation to produce a local equivalent probably began in the early years of the ninth century, some time before the Belitung ship set sail. As the Iraqi potters sought to replicate the texture, shape and colour of the imported Chinese ceramics, they developed unique methods that reveal their skill and imagination. The task of imitating the coveted shiny white surface and hard compact body of Chinese wares represented a formidable challenge for the Iraqis. Neither the essential raw

FIG. 20.2 Stone paste bowl with clear glaze, Northern China, probably Gongxian, ninth century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. no C.22-1950. Photograph © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

material (white kaolin clay) nor the kiln technology for replicating Chinese high-fired white porcelain or stoneware was locally available. The finest clay of Iraq was low-firing and yellowish in colour, as if 'moulded from an egg yolk [*muhh bayd*]'.[10]

Instead of struggling with these obstacles, Iraqi potters focused on achieving the visual effect of the Chinese original. They realised how to create elegant vessel shapes and invented an opaque white glaze capable of completely disguising the yellowish clay – an ingenious substitute for Chinese pottery's integral whiteness. The new Iraqi glaze recipe, which combined lead (as a flux) and tin (as an opacifying agent), was the antecedent of the medieval and modern European 'tin glaze'.

Aiming to produce perfect imitations of Chinese imports, the potters copied every visible detail. The vast majority of the Abbasid wares are open bowls of Chinese form (Figs 20.2 and 20.3). However, the Xing or Ding wares that may have comprised Harun's gift in the eighth century were not necessarily the prototypes, as indicated by the absence of rolled or everted lips on the Islamic bowls. The most influential wares appear to have been the white stonewares produced at the Gongxian kilns in northern China, which arrived by way of the overseas route and were also found on the Belitung shipwreck.[11] Their characteristic features – a hemispherical body with a flaring rim and low footring – are duplicated in the earliest Iraqi opaque white-glazed wares, which also precisely emulate the imports' dimensions.[12] The Gongxian wares were less refined than the premium white ceramics – including genuine porcelaneous wares – aboard the Belitung ship, and hence may have been more accessible to the Iraqi potters.

FIG. 20.3 Earthenware bowl with opaque white glaze, Iraq (probably Basra), 700–900. Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no C.178-1984. Photograph © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Once covered with a pure white glaze, the smooth interior surface of the Iraqi bowls invited new decorative possibilities. Bold colours and designs soon enhanced the Chinese aesthetic of simple and elegant forms. The potters' first choice was an intense cobalt blue pigment, which offered a dramatic contrast to the white-glazed background; this was the first experiment with the now-familiar concept of 'blue-on-white', undertaken some time in the first quarter of the ninth century.[13] Proud of their creations and wishing to identify their origins, the Iraqi potters signed some of their pieces, possibly with the additional aim of securing further orders or commissions. Arabic inscriptions of the form *'amal*… (work of…) instantly revealed that, although the bowls appeared to be Chinese, they were actually made locally, by artisans with such names as Muhammad, Ahmad and 'Umar. Among these first experiments are also vessels which reflect the pre-Abbasid ceramic repertoire (Plate 16).

Many design elements of the early, cobalt blue-painted wares reflect the natural landscape of southern Iraq and the rich flora and fauna of its extensive wet marshes, fertile meadows and date-palm groves. The scale of overseas demand for dates had huge economic implications for the region, and the tree, with its fronds and fruit, appears frequently in the potters' paintings. Baskets of fresh dates as well as such products as date syrup, honey and wine were exported across the Indian Ocean as far as China.[14] Turquoise-glazed storage jars were used to transport these commodities; fragments have been found on Chinese coastal sites, and three complete examples are preserved in the burial tomb of a Fujian princess who died in the year 930.[15]

Date syrup was highly praised in Chinese pharmacopoeia and Buddhist texts as having special healing properties, possibly owing to its high sugar content. This appreciation is reflected in Chinese ceramic production as well: date palms appear as part of the relief decoration on Changsha jars found on the Belitung shipwreck.[16] A white-glazed storage jar made in Iraq (now in the British Museum) is also decorated with leaves or branches of dates that could indicate its original contents.[17] The green splashes on its surface, however, reflect the influence of imported Chinese wares also associated with production at Gongxian,[18] while its shape resembles the storage jars with hinged lids and loop handles produced at the Changsha kilns and retrieved from the Belitung shipwreck.

Parallels can also be found between the crescent shapes that embellish the rims of both Islamic bowls and Changsha ceramics. The vast bulk of the stonewares from the Belitung wreck are painted bowls (some 55,000) which are similarly decorated but with iron-brown designs.[19] The Islamic crescents were painted directly on the surface in cobalt blue, while the Chinese motifs were created by dipping the rim into the iron-rich liquid glaze. This would seem to imply it was originally a Chinese concept, adopted by Islamic potters, especially given that over 90 per cent of the finds from the wreck include this design element. However, it is important to emphasise that crescents also occur around a beautiful Islamic cobalt-blue glass dish found at the Famensi temple site in northern China and deposited there before the year 874.[20] This object, obviously held in high esteem by the Chinese, has a floral motif in the centre with a precise parallel in an Iraqi blue-on-white pottery dish.[21] This parallel indicates not only the close relationship between Islamic glass and ceramics at this time but also how both media could have exerted influence on Chinese ceramic production. Whether painting swirling, floral-inspired designs on the interior of the hemispherical bowls was a Chinese or Iraqi invention remains unresolved, but it would certainly appear that many of the painted Changsha wares found on the Belitung ship were designed to appeal to an Islamic taste for elaborate decoration. Indeed, there is a remarkable synergy between the fluid, spontaneity of the copper-green and iron-brown paintings of the Changsha bowls and the polychrome lustrewares which emerged in the next phase of the Iraqi ceramic industry.

Following the commercial success of their cobalt-blue designs, Iraqi potters began to experiment, some time in the middle of the ninth century, with pigments borrowed from the Islamic glass industry, described later as the 'colours of two-firings'.[22] They painted mixtures of copper and silver onto previously glazed and fired pieces, and then fixed the design with a second firing to produce an iridescent metallic sheen (Plate 17). The lustre technique was admirably suited to copying the prestigious arts of Islamic painted glass and precious metalware, and raised the status of Iraqi pottery to that of 'decorative art'. Glass and metal vessels served

as tableware for the Iraqi elite, which undoubtedly inspired this redirection in the industry's experiments.

The potters' first experiments appear to have involved a bichrome palette of brown and yellow, as used previously on Islamic glass, but now applied almost exclusively to ceramics with metal shapes.[23] This was followed by spectacular ruby and polychrome effects, ranging from olive green through yellow to crimson and purple. Many of the elaborately painted designs were inspired by *millefiore* glass and patterned silk textiles. This multi-coloured palette apparently proved too complex and expensive, and was later reduced to a single colour, a yellowish- or greenish-gold, some time in the late ninth century. While Chinese influence is difficult to detect in the bichrome phase, it did continue to play an important role during subsequent phases. In addition to copying Chinese forms of hemispherical bowls (Figs 20.2 and 20.3) and storage jars, Iraqi vessels from this time also include small, lobed dishes similar to Chinese green-glazed stoneware vessels from the Belitung shipwreck.[24] This form also occurs in solid gold among the precious-metal objects from the wreck, and similar vessels must have served as the original prototype for the green wares.

In total more than thirty gold and silver vessels were recovered from the Belitung ship, one of the most astonishing aspects of the survivals from this wreck. These include luxurious tablewares: four cups and three dishes made of solid gold, a magnificent wine flask of gilt silver, four silver bowls and two platters, as well as a golden bracelet and 14 silver boxes of various sizes.[25] It is not certain whether these precious objects were destined for wealthy Muslim consumers, intended for use along the voyage to secure safe passage, or were part of a diplomatic gift from the Tang court. Their existence, however, does confirm the circulation of precious-metal objects by way of the maritime route, and points to their availability as references for both Abbasid ceramics and metalwork. Moreover, it is now certain that a Tang bronze mirror previously found in Iran was not an isolated export, especially as the Belitung cargo preserves 27 related examples.[26]

Single or paired animals frolicking among scrolling vines with large leaves or flowers is a prevalent theme among the diverse metal objects of the Belitung ship. In all cases the major design is set in relief, and in the silver-gilt boxes it appears against a punched ground. Animals, large abstract vegetal motifs, and punched grounds also dominate the decorative repertoire of the Iraqi monochrome lustrewares. While the Chinese metalwork of the Belitung ship is perhaps too early to be the direct precedent for the taste for single bold motifs, it does raise the possibility that this artistic phenomenon had a Chinese origin.

The glittering effects of lustre achieved by the Iraqi pottery industry certainly garnered wide appeal. Royalty commissioned lustre tiles for their palaces and mosques, while tablewares in various styles met the demands of a wide clientele and

have been found in excavations from Portugal to Thailand.[27] By any standards, these were dramatic accomplishments for medieval craft innovation. Not only had the Iraqi potters created ceramics that were technically superior to any previously made in the region, but in less than forty years they had also transformed their common clay vessels into vehicles for complex painted decoration and made them available to the citizens of a vast Islamic empire.

POTTERS AND MERCHANTS

Behind this blossoming of technological and artistic innovation was a new and sophisticated industry. Potters seldom had the means to invest in the materials and time necessary for experimentation. The swift development and success of the Iraqi pottery industry, therefore, was long associated with imperial patronage and the collaborative efforts of 'ingenious craftsmen' brought to Baghdad (and the palace city of Samarra) by the Abbasid rulers.[28] However, recent scientific analysis of the clay used to make the ceramics has confirmed that production was based in the port town of Basra, precisely the same place where the first Chinese ceramics were offloaded from Middle Eastern trading vessels, probably similar to the Belitung ship.[29]

Located on the edge of the southern Iraqi desert and the banks of the Shatt al-Arab, Basra was uniquely positioned to serve as a 'port of the sea, an emporium of the land, and a place of manufacture.'[30] All of the major land, sea and river routes of Iraq converge at its gates. While the natural geology of the delta provided excellent clay, all of the other ingredients for ceramic production had to be imported.[31] The lead and tin needed for the opaque white glaze were probably from the Arabian Peninsula and Southeast Asia, respectively. For the painted decoration, the cobalt blue, along with the copper and silver for the lustre pigments, would have come from Arabia or Iran, where mining sites are documented.[32] The overland and overseas trade routes used to import these goods were also essential to Basra's development as an important centre of precious-gem cutting, rock-crystal carving, pearl processing, glass manufacturing, gilding of mirrors and preparation of pigments. Cross-fertilisation between these crafts must in part explain the potters' capacity for innovation at so many levels and in so many different directions.

Precisely who these inventive individuals were, however, is a puzzling question. The historical and technological evidence appears to point to a community of potters with links both to the educated elite and to merchants involved in overseas trade. Their signatures on the blue-on-white bowls imply that they were literate, and at least one of them may have been a descendant of an eighth-century poet.[33] Their ceramics certainly caught the eye of the contemporary bard al-Azdi, who praised the wares as

resembling the 'surface of a white pearl [*durra bayda'*] [and] shaped in roundel form like the contour of the moon [*makhruta min darat al-qamar*]'.[34] The Basran potters also knew a surprising amount about Chinese methods of shaping ceramics in the early ninth century. Although Iraqi clay was softer and more pliable, technical analyses of the Basran copies reveal they were made in precisely the same way as the Chinese models, illustrating the intensity of contact between Basra and China at this time.

In China, the aplasticity (stiffness) of local clays gave rise to diverse shaping techniques, including moulds, templates and cutting tools.[35] The standard method used in Chinese workshops involved throwing a bowl to the approximate dimensions of its final size and then inverting it over a convex mould to give the interior surface uniform shape and texture. The mould also served to support the wet vessel so that its exterior could be trimmed to the desired thinness. Features of exactly the same sequence of production can be identified in a Basran bowl using special imaging techniques (xeroradiography): namely diagonal particle orientation indicative of throwing on a potter's wheel, evidence of moulding on the interior, and horizontal trimming lines on the exterior.[36] Clearly, Basran potters had somehow managed to learn Chinese techniques.

Considering the entrepreneurial environment in Basra, as well as the spirit of the time, it is plausible that enterprising merchants involved in the transoceanic trade introduced Chinese manufacturing practices to Iraq. They could have brought Chinese potters to the port town or simply described to the Basran potters what they had observed in Chinese workshops. We know from historical sources that Basran merchants were actively involved in long-distance trade, and a considerable number of them were established in ports along the Chinese coast – including Guangzhou, the point of embarkation of the Belitung ship.[37]

Indeed, some of these men could have been aboard the Belitung ship or have had prior contact with its captain, which would explain a surprising link with Basra revealed in the ship's contents. Among its rich cargo are three extraordinary ceramic dishes, painted in cobalt blue (Fig. 20.4) and decorated with multilobed leaves that closely resemble the palm fronds found on Basran bowls (Fig. 20.5).[38] In all three vessels the scheme is quite similar, with a central rosette circumscribed by a lozenge encircled by rotating fronds and trefoils marking the cardinal points. In a variation of the theme, the centre of one of the dishes is occupied by two overlapping lozenges. This composition is highly reminiscent of the more abstract designs seen on the Basran wares, in which the fronds and trefoils are interpreted as palmettes.

Sherds of related Chinese blue-and-white wares have been found in the Arab residential district of the port of Yangzhou, implying that they were intended for foreign consumption and not for the local Chinese market.[39] Curiously, both the body and glaze of these wares are similar to wares from Gongxian.[40] This kiln, therefore,

FIG. 20.4 Dish with overlapping lozenge motif from the Belitung wreck. Gongxian kilns, c.825–50, diameter 24cm.

FIG. 20.5 Earthenware bowl painted in cobalt blue on opaque white glaze, Iraq, Basra, ninth century, Victoria and Albert Museum, Circ. 175-1926. Photograph © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

must have manufactured both plain white and blue-decorated wares for export. The latter was almost certainly encouraged by the great demand for blue-decorated ceramics in the Abbasid empire. Although no Basran wares have as yet been found in China, the presence of a group of Islamic cobalt-blue glass plates at Famensi, with incised decoration exhibiting strong stylistic parallels with the Iraqi cobalt-blue and lustre-painted ceramics, emphasises the fluidity of long-distance trade at this time. Ceramics from Iraq painted with fronds could also have made their way to China as part of this trade, and served as the direct inspiration for the blue-painted wares at Gongxian, especially as production of the latter appears to have been small-scale and of short duration.[41] Although cobalt blue had been used previously in Tang *sancai* wares in the eighth century, there is no evidence of their export to the Middle East. Cobalt-blue painting appears to be an independent initiative of the Basran potters, which later spurred the development of ninth-century Gongxian blue-and-white.[42]

Such sharing of ideas and techniques points to the involvement of intermediaries, most likely enterprising Middle Eastern merchants, who not only commissioned new types of wares but also informed Chinese and Iraqi potters of the work of their foreign colleagues. This mercantile interest in ceramics might also explain how the capital investment necessary for innovation was locally available in Basra, how Chinese fabrication methods were transferred to Iraq, and how the Basran wares decorated in lustre and cobalt blue came to be so widely distributed (Fig. 20.1).

THE SPREAD OF INNOVATION

The Basran potters' three great technological advances of the ninth century – the invention of an opaque white glaze, painting in cobalt blue, and the overglaze lustre technique – shaped Islamic as well as Asian and European ceramic traditions for centuries to come. The widespread distribution of the Basran wares in the ninth century was accompanied by a dramatic change in the ceramic landscape. Glazed and painted ceramics began to be made from Spain to Central Asia, a span of over 8000km, using local clay slips, pigments and glazes.[43] The method of achieving a white-glazed surface moved swiftly, and led ultimately, in the west, to the great faience and maiolica traditions of Southern Europe.

Cobalt blue and lustre, by contrast, remained trade secrets of the Basran potters. Lustre was eventually transmitted to Cairo at the end of the tenth century, presumably by migrant potters from Basra attracted to Egypt by the new patronage of the Fatimid court. From there it travelled east to Iran, where it reached its apogee in the first few decades of the thirteenth century.

In East Asia, the first tentative experiments with cobalt blue during the Tang period (618–907) were followed five centuries later by blue-and-white porcelain produced during the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368). The Chinese combination of dazzling white porcelain and brilliant blue painting under a flawless transparent glaze proved triumphant, inspiring numerous ceramic traditions, from blue-and-white in Iran and the Iznik potteries of Turkey to Dutch Delft and Portuguese tilework. With European expansion overseas in the sixteenth century, these techniques were transmitted to the Americas, where they were adopted by indigenous potters as well.

NOTES

1 This article is an edited version of my contribution to the exhibition catalogue *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds* – see Hallett 2011 – and is reproduced here with the kind permission of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. It draws on research conducted for my doctoral thesis at the University of Oxford (completed in 1999), which was co-supervised by James Allan, who provided warm and encouraging support throughout.

2 Lane 1947: 10; Karabacek 1884: 284.

3 Lane 1947: 10; Crowe 1976–77: 264.

4 Raby 1986: 82.

5 On the Xing kilns, see Li and Cheng 1984: 40–41; Richards 1984–85: 61–66; Vainker 1991: 65–67; Valenstein 1989: 72–74. On the Ding kilns, see Richard 1984–85: 71–74; Vainker 1991: 93–94.

6 Lane 1939: 56–65; Raby 1985a.

7 Krahl et al. 2011.

8 Krahl et al. 2011.

9 Hallett 1999: Chapter 4.

10 Al-Jahiz 1970: 499; Pellat 1969: 141.

11 Krahl 2011a.

12 Hallett 1999: Chapter 3; Hallett 2005.

13 In the blue-on-white wares, the cobalt-blue pigment is applied on top of the opaque white glaze and not under a transparent glaze, as with Chinese blue-and-white and its many imitations.

14 See the articles by Ho 1991, 1994 and 1995.

15 Chen 1985: 45, Figs 1–2, 5.

16 Krahl et al. 2011: Fig. 49.

17 British Museum, London, acc. no 1920 3–10 1.

18 Krahl et al. 2011: 60–65, 160–83. See also Chen 1995: 55–63.

19 Krahl et al. 2011: 54–57, 144.

20 An 1991: 130.
21 Soustiel 1985: Fig. 24.
22 Allan 1973a.
23 Hallett 1999: Chapter 3.
24 Krahl et al. 2011: Fig. 131.
25 Krahl et al. 2011: Figs 66–71, 174–79.
26 Krahl et al. 2011: 86, 213–19, Figs 164–69.
27 Early Islamic wares painted in cobalt blue or lustre have been found on sites in the Mediterranean (Silves, Malaga, Alexandria, Qum al-Dikka), the Red Sea (Aqaba, Athar, Jidda, al-Jar, al-Mabiyat, Aden) and the Persian Gulf (Siraf, Kish, Suhar, Arja, Ras al-Khaima), and across the breadth of the Indian Ocean from East Africa (Shanga, Manda, Kilwa, Comores) to Pakistan (Bambore, Brahminabad), India (Maldives), Sri Lanka (Mantai) and Thailand (Ko Kha Krao). For complete references, see Hallett 1999: Chapter 1, 18–19.
28 This idea is based on Ya'qubi's record that the caliph Harun al-Mu'tasim brought artists and workmen from Basra, Kufa, Misr (Egypt), and Antioch to Samarra: see al-Ya'qubi 1892: 264.
29 Mason and Keall 1991; Hallett 1999: Chapter 2.
30 Al-Muqaddasi 1906: 124.
31 Hallett 1999: Chapters 7 and 8.
32 Hallett 1999: Chapter 8.
33 Hallett 1999: Chapter 3.
34 Al-Azdi 1902: 46; Tamari 1984: 15–16; Tamari 1995: 137.
35 Hallett 1999: Chapter 3; Rawson 1989: 275–300; Medley 1981: 87.
36 Hallett 1999: Chapter 3.
37 For historical evidence of Middle Eastern (and specifically Basran) merchants in China, see al-Mas'udi 1861: 307–8; al-Sirafi 1922: 85–92; al-Marwazi 1942: 5, 10, 17, 22, Chapter 8, sections 16, 26; Lewicki 1935: 178–82; Schafer 1963: 164; Ma 1990: 100; Hourani 1995: 63.
38 Krahl 2011b: Figs 59, 65, 159.
39 Jiang 1984: 63–66; Zhang and Zhu 1985: 67–71, col. pls, Figs 1–4; 72–76, Fig. 5; 77–80, Figs 1–6. See also Mao 1977: 333–36 for a small tripod vessel painted in cobalt blue.
40 Scott 2004: 15.
41 An 1991.
42 Hallett 2005: 27; see also Tite and Wood 2005: 34, which notes a compositional overlap between cobalt blue on the Gongxian wares and eighth-century *sancai*.
43 Watson 2004 offers a good survey of the evolution of Islamic pottery.

21

BRANDING 'TRADITION' IN CONTEMPORARY TIN-GLAZE POTTERY FROM PUEBLA

FARZANEH PIROUZ-MOUSSAVI

Long before the Spanish discovery of the Americas in 1492, the Iraqi-born craft of tin-glaze ceramics had been exported to Islamic Spain. In the sixteenth century, it was introduced to the New World as part of Spanish heritage. Tin-glaze arrived in Mexico to an uncertain future, which depended on the ebb and flow of colonial politics and economic history. The most important production centre for tin-glaze came to be the small town of Puebla, known as 'Talavera' after the city of Talavera de la Reina in central Spain, where the polychrome tin-glaze ceramic industry had had its centre at the time of the conquest. Contemporary observers drew comparisons between the production of Old and New Spain, claiming that Puebla's tin-glaze ceramics were of an equal standard, if not better. Francisco de Ajofrin, a Capuchin friar who travelled throughout Mexico between 1763 and 1767, exclaimed, 'The workshops that employ the local people (rightly considered the most capable and talented in all New Spain) [produce]… beautiful, delicate and clean *loza* [glazed ware], or clay that is even finer than that of Talavera.'[1] And writing in the mid-eighteenth century, Juan Villa Sánchez praised its pristine quality: 'The *loza* of which so much is produced in Puebla, is so fine and beautiful that it equals, even surpasses, that of Talavera [de la Reina] or Cartagena de las Indias: the effort of the potting communities manages to emulate and simulate the beauty of Chinese porcelain.'[2]

Between 1650 and 1750, the 'golden age' of Puebla's tin-glaze ceramics industry, these wares were elevated to the level of a symbol of the unique status of the settler classes, who were seeking to define their own identity in the face of the ruling aristocracy of Spain. But in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, competition from

mass-produced European goods pushed the production of 'Talavera' almost to the point of elimination. Having survived that commercial onslaught, it finally fell from grace in the turbulent aftermath of the Mexican revolution in 1921. It was rejected by the post-revolution ideology as a relic of the colonial era, because it had been a product exclusively made for the white settlers. Paradoxically, 'Talavera' was saved through the eventual reappraisal of indigenous crafts, in which it came to represent 'true' Mexican identity. As a handmade artefact, Talavera was sought out, in the enthusiasm of foreign collectors, as the 'authentic' art of Mexico. The search for the 'authentic' and 'indigenous' by foreign *aficionados* brought about the assimilation of these concepts and categories by Mexicans themselves, which ultimately secured the future of the industry.

This paper seeks to explain why and how this craft, descended from the invention of Iraqi potters in the ninth century, secured the status and value of contemporary art. The methodology employed is fundamentally anthropological: the material and insight were obtained from personal interviews conducted with master potters, artisans, museum directors, gallery owners, fine artists, collectors and consumers.

NEW ORDINANCES: PROTECTING AN ANCIENT ARTFORM

Today the pride of contemporary 'Talavera' potters in Puebla lies in the claim that it is a 'traditional' handicraft, made with materials and procedures which have remained unaltered for more than a millennium, from ninth-century Iraq to present-day Mexico. The Mexican potters are proud of this Iraqi heritage. But with the emergence of mass tourism in Mexico there were cumulative changes in the Talavera industry in the 1970s. Many artisans set up workshops to take advantage of this market, with immediate and deleterious consequences for the quality of their products. The finer and more expensive standards of the authentic tradition were abandoned in order to increase quantity. In 1990, in response to this alarming decline, a group of master potters in Puebla gathered to make representations to the government to stop this process, and to draw up a list of criteria designed to protect and standardise traditional production processes by reviving the regulations which had been set out in the first Ordinances of 1653.[3] They were concerned that without the Ordinances and the old guild system, the standard and quality of Puebla's tin-glaze ceramics was slipping and could not be restored unless stringent regulations were put in place. Higher standards of production were needed if the industry was to survive and not be overwhelmed by the mass of low-quality products. The production methods endorsed by the seventeenth-century Ordinances provided an excellent guideline and inspiration – after all, the fame of Puebla's tin-glaze ceramics had been founded upon the industry's vigorous adherence to the regulations

of 1653. Ultimately, the return to the seventeenth-century methods of production signalled the continuation and protection of this ancient glazing tradition. The request for 'new' measures to improve the quality of Puebla's tin-glaze ceramic production by reviving the old Ordinances implied that the Islamic methods had been of the highest standards and set the best production model.

The intention behind the revival of the Ordinances was twofold: to protect the commercial interests of the workshops sponsoring the new edicts; and to protect the quality of the product that could be called 'Talavera'. It was obvious that by reserving the rights to traditional production methods exclusively for potters in Puebla, the state of Puebla would benefit. The governor of Puebla, Manuel Bartlett Diaz, sponsored the request of the potters in 1993. In July the same year a declaration was published in the *Periódico Oficial del Estado de Puebla*, and the denomination of 'Talavera' was henceforth restricted to the 'Zona de Talavera de Puebla', which consisted of Atlixco, Cholula (San Andres, San Pedro and Santa Isabel), Puebla and Tecali, in the state of Puebla; this was extended later to the municipality of San Pablo del Monte in Tlaxcala.[4]

Furthermore, the Federal government confirmed that the denomination 'Talavera' was to be reserved exclusively for the products made by Puebla potters according to the strict regulations of traditional production, set out by the original Ordinance of 1653.[5] In 1997, the Federal government issued the required decree and in 1998 it was published under the Official Mexican Norm which determined the characteristics with which the ceramic products of the Talavera Zone must comply in order to obtain the Denomination of Origin (DO4).[6] Given the dominant role of the state in Mexico's economy and society, such an endorsement could make the difference between survival and extinction, because of the huge commercial potential for those benefiting from the state's imprimatur.

The new Ordinances raised the recognition of Talavera production in Mexico itself. While the original Ordinances restricted production to white potters only,[7] the modern regulations of 1998 imposed a new restrictive practice of limiting the national and international exhibitions exclusively to certified 'Talavera'. The restrictions therefore shifted from producer to the object itself. But what both set of Ordinances share is that both decreed a strict observation of traditional rules for production processes, techniques, materials and colours, and called for regular examinations and inspections.

To maintain their status as certified workshops, the master potters are obliged to submit to periodic inspections and examinations by the Regulatory Council (Consejo Regulador).[8] In 1999 the first certificates of authenticity were issued to six workshops in Puebla,[9] though more have since joined. At present, 11 workshops are regularly inspected by the Regulatory Council.[10] All workshops in the 'Zona de Talavera de Puebla' are encouraged to apply, but membership is like a revolving door, with workshops

joining and leaving because of financial considerations, political squabbles, personality clashes and commercial rivalries.

La Trinidad provides a good example. It was part of the original group applying for the denomination of 'Talavera' in 1990, but now its owner Jorge Guevara has withdrawn from the group of certified workshops due to internal conflicts. Allegedly he left following what he claims to be the theft of his trade secret, clearly implying collusion by the powers that control the Regulatory Council. Nevertheless, he continues to adhere to the regulations, since this is essential for maintaining the market position of his workshop and his products. His market consists of a far-flung circle of longstanding and loyal clients, within Mexico and abroad. His products are made on a commission-only basis. He does not maintain a stock for immediate sale, nor does he ship his finished products: buyers have to come and collect themselves.[11]

Other workshops have likewise dropped out of the circle of certified producers, while new ones have joined. The register of workshops, which quantifies the membership of the Regulatory Council, is therefore constantly changing. Barbara Mauldin in *Cerámica y Cultura* drew up a list while researching in Puebla between 1999 and 2001.[12] She named eight certified workshops. In 2008, several more were added, while others had dropped out.[13] This illustrates the fluid character of the membership, much more flexible than in the seventeenth century. Jorge Guevara stated, for example, that although workshops that leave the circle continue to produce their tin-glaze wares according to strict regulations, there are a variety of reasons for not staying as certified members: financial considerations, in particular, since maintaining consistency in high-quality production is costly.[14] Today, approximately fifty workshops are active in producing various types of tin-glaze ceramics, both certified and non-certified 'Talavera'.

This marks a significant increase, and results from the recognition of Talavera as an object for collectors and tourists. The number of workshops is obviously not fixed and depends on market conditions. There are hundreds of shops and stalls throughout the city. Production has been responsive to market trends to suit changes in fashion. New shapes and forms have appeared to augment the traditional products. Apart from the traditional vessels – such as *tibores* (jars), inspired by Chinese forms, and *lebrillos* (basins), *albarelos* (apothecary jars) and *platos* (plates), all derived from 'Hispano-Moresque' traditions – Talavera potters now also make light-switch plates, bathroom accessories, frames, clock faces, waste-paper containers, ashtrays, buttons and figurines. The designs also reflect the dynamism of this industry, with constantly innovative patterns and motifs. However, the quality of these wares varies considerably, and is especially obvious in the application and finish of designs, colours and glazes.

The ceramics are sold in three different categories: 'authentic-certified', 'traditional-colonial', and 'ceramic-modern'. The first group – Talavera with a capital 'T' – is part of

the process of regulated production and inspection. Production follows the traditional methods set out in the 1653 Ordinances but is much longer; the quality of the products is far superior, and consequently the prices are higher. Though workshops in the second category adhere to the Ordinances, they do not allow supervision or inspection by the Regulatory Council, claiming that the costs are prohibitive. Finally, workshops of the third group are more inclined to use chemicals for the glaze and colours. Their wares are speedily made, partly by machine, use different ingredients, and are of much lower quality, with clear differences in appearance.

Before the 1998 Ordinances all three categories would have had the word 'Talavera' painted on the base or back of the objects, but following them this denomination can only be marked on products that have been certified by the Regulatory Council. In addition to this mark, 'genuine' Talavera has other distinctive features, including the quality of the clay, colour of the glaze and enamels, relief appearance of the decoration, hardness of the fired body, and the distinctive ring that sounds when a finished vessel is tapped.

At the Mercado de Parián in Puebla's old Plazuela de San Roque, all three categories can be found. The artisans here are dependent for their survival on the arrival of coach parties of tourists from Mexico City. Their ceramics are aimed at the relatively undiscerning tourist market and, as a result, the non-certified sector is dominant. The finer products at the higher end of the market are more likely to be bought directly in the workshops of the master potters or in galleries and museum shops.

TALAVERA IN THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

Re-establishing the reputation of Talavera as a high-class ceramic ware has enabled a number of individuals to promote and market it to the highest strata of Mexican society. The new regulations did not entail the comprehensive return to the restrictive practices of the old guild system: while some of the older master craftsmen would have been in favour of that, it was unrealistic in an era of globalised competition. Such restrictions only prevent the evolution of the industry and the enhancement of its quality and productivity, and the younger and more dynamic enterprises are more aware of the necessity to adapt for the long-term prospects of the industry. At the local level, changes are now taking place in relations between the Puebla workshops. The guilds no longer have total control over who is admitted or allowed to practise as a Talavera potter. As younger potters who learnt their trade in the workshops of older master potters are setting up on their own, palpable tensions are developing between the more established workshops and the new ones, which are often more successful. The masters feel betrayed

by competitors whom they have trained, and are quite open about this resentment in conversation; in fact, the older workshops are benefiting from the overall growth of the market for Talavera, which is being generated by the activities of these more dynamic, less restricted workshops.

From the perspective of the newer workshops the restrictive practices of the past are no longer suitable. Women now can set up their own workshops, whereas in the original Ordinances they were explicitly forbidden from doing so. The case of Angélica Moreno is illustrative. Moreno learnt her trade in 1990 from Maestro Jorge Guevara of La Trinidad, and talks freely about her time there. She considered La Trinidad 'a magical alchemist centre where earth was turned into art'.[15] Once she mastered the skills of preparing the clays, throwing, mixing the colours and the lead-and-tin-oxide glaze, she established her own workshop – Talavera de la Reyna in Cholula – together with a number of other skilled potters and painters who left their master potters to join her, thereby attracting harsh criticism.

The first two years were experimental, a trial-and-error exercise. From the very beginning Moreno and her team 'intended to go further than anything that had been done in Talavera before'.[16] She proposed new designs inspired by old patterns, by taking details of the traditional decorative language and setting them into a new decorative context: for example, she combines the blue *aborronado* (blurred dot or feather design) typical of the seventeenth-century *lebrillos*, *albarelos* and *jarrones* with other patterns, or uses it on its own (Figs 21.1 and 21.2).[17] She has also created new designs exclusive to her workshop, and has introduced new colours for traditional patterns.

Moreno and her team favour simplicity over the visual saturation characteristic of production in the nineteenth century, and their works are minimalist in comparison. But simplifying in this way is difficult, as most of the tin glaze is left exposed. Saturated designs have the advantage of covering all the flaws of the tin glaze, but without them all inconsistencies are obvious. Improvements in the glazing are therefore essential. The majority of potters in Puebla avoid this challenge by entirely covering their wares with patterns of different colours, so Moreno's insistence on a flawless tin-glaze surface has been a major step forward for the industry, and she has been personally involved in refining the ingredients and processing. Artisans have to repeat the process of grinding and pulverise the minerals until hardly any unevenness remains in the glaze and pigments. The brushstrokes are refined to the point of perfection, losing the rough 'rustic' features of many handmade ceramics. The colours employed keep faithfully to the traditional palette (orange, green, yellow, purple, red and cobalt blue), but are brighter and applied with great care, always contrasting darker with lighter colours. This method gives the design a sharp edge, and the quality of Moreno's work stands out because of these improvements and innovations.

FIG. 21.1 One of the designs of the Talavera de la Reyna range of tableware. Photograph Talavera de la Reyna, Cholula, 2009.

FIG. 21.2 Another design of the Talavera de la Reyna range of tableware. Photograph Talavera de la Reyna, Cholula, 2009.

The restrictions of the old guild system would have drowned such entrepreneurial spirit. No doubt Moreno provoked the 'old school', but she was successful in taking Talavera beyond its restricted boundaries, while keeping faithfully to the authentic production technique. But she took the industry in yet another new direction. It was fortuitous that a number of artists were looking to experiment with ceramics in the early 1990s: Moreno took the initiative in 1993 and invited master potter and artist José Lazcarro to create some new works in her workshop. A year later, with the help of Alejandro Moreno Toscano, a well-connected intellectual, other fine artists such as Germán Montalvo and Luca Bray joined the experiment. This collaboration led to Jaime Contreras, curator at the Museo Amparo in Puebla, proposing to stage an exhibition of contemporary Talavera in 1997. The exhibition, which was entitled 'Talavera: an Avant-Garde Tradition', would celebrate a traditional craft and the possibilities for its future.

Moreno and her workshop participated by collaborating with 20 contemporary artists – 15 Mexican and five Japanese – to produce 23 pieces for the exhibition.[18] The conditions for the invited artists were 'to adapt to the technical demands of the medium, using only traditional colours and a rigorous technique established in the sixteenth century'.[19] The artists were given three options: to decorate traditionally shaped pieces with contemporary designs; to remake existing pieces into entirely new ones, by adapting, fragmenting, and otherwise transforming them; or to create pieces that were entirely new, in form and decoration.[20]

Contreras stressed that the underlying principle of the project was 'respect for tradition, not as a return to the past, but a foundation from which to look towards the future'.[21] This was not an easy task. Some artists who had previous experience with ceramics met with significant difficulties. The raw materials for the tin-glaze production were different to the malleability of high-temperature clays. Unfamiliar processes – such as the elasticity, drying process and shrinkage of the clay – had to be taken into account. Those artists who had never before worked with ceramics had to learn the process from scratch. Moreno and her team of 25 artisans taught them the process, though the collaboration between artisan and artist was not easy. The artisans were reluctant to share their secrets, while the artists found it frustrating to handle the raw materials. Handling the clay was not the only challenge; the sandy and heavy textures of the pigments were not malleable, and colours before firing were totally different from the finished result. From dull pastel tones they transformed to vibrant and luminous shades. It was a steep learning process, which nevertheless inspired great respect for the artisans' work. One artist exclaimed, 'It was a revelation, in the sense that you were confronted with a medium and a material that you did not know. You had to apprehend it, not only intellectually, but with the senses, in order to have a dialogue with the clay.'[22] After a process of trial and error the results were truly remarkable. Not only were new

shapes created, but also old designs made a comeback in a new context (Plate 18 and Fig. 21.3).

This collaborative project propelled Moreno and her workshop to the forefront of the industry and the market, and consolidated her position in modernist circles among the fine artists of Mexico. Other successful artists – such as Francisco Toledo, Sergio Hernández, Germán Montalvo and Vicente Roja – were inspired to co-operate with Moreno in similar projects, and Moreno gradually built a formidable collection of 'artistic' modern Talavera. Her expansive repertoire provided her with the platform to break out of the provincial confines of Puebla and organise a number of high-profile exhibitions in collaboration with metropolitan museums.

The recognition she gained from contemporary artists encouraged Hector Rivero Borrell, director of the Franz Mayer Museum in Mexico City, to organise exhibitions with Moreno and her team. This museum holds a large and prestigious collection of colonial artefacts, in particular Talavera, and plays a central role in the cultural life of Mexico. The artefacts made in Moreno's workshop, together with some of the traditional wares from the Franz Mayer Museum have been displayed at exhibitions in Mexico, throughout Spain, and even in China.[23] The endorsement of the Franz Mayer Museum was the ultimate stamp of credibility, and brought Moreno's achievements into full view of Mexico's high society. It was also an important milestone in raising the status of the Talavera 'brand' as a whole. Talavera has now been accepted by the Mexican upper classes, who actively commission it as works of art or as objects for use.

Moreno has marketed Talavera as an object of luxury in order to reach out to wealthy Mexicans. At the same time, by adhering to the strict regulations of the seventeenth century she has reinforced the idea that this ware is an authentic and traditional symbol of Mexico. In promoting Talavera as a prestigious ceramic she convinced those who considered anything Mexican to be too folkloric or 'ethnic', and thereby inferior to imported European or American objects, that Talavera could be equal, even more valuable, because of its long tradition. With the traditional technique at its core, contemporary artists have moulded Talavera into modern art, propelling the tin-glaze technique into the future. It demonstrated that a traditional artform had not reached its limits, as most had thought until recently. Something *passé* and *démodé* had the potential to be an exclusively modern and indigenously Mexican artform. Talavera could thus sit proudly alongside designer objects and not be pushed out of the market by European goods. To the affluent Mexican urban consumer, it has gained such importance as to merit registration in inventory and testamentary documents.[24] Moreno's aesthetic sense for design, enhanced by collaboration with contemporary artists (Plate 18 and Fig. 21.3) and her insistence on the finest quality of finish, have added a new dimension to the production of Talavera. With new concepts, and a more refined finish, this 'ancient'

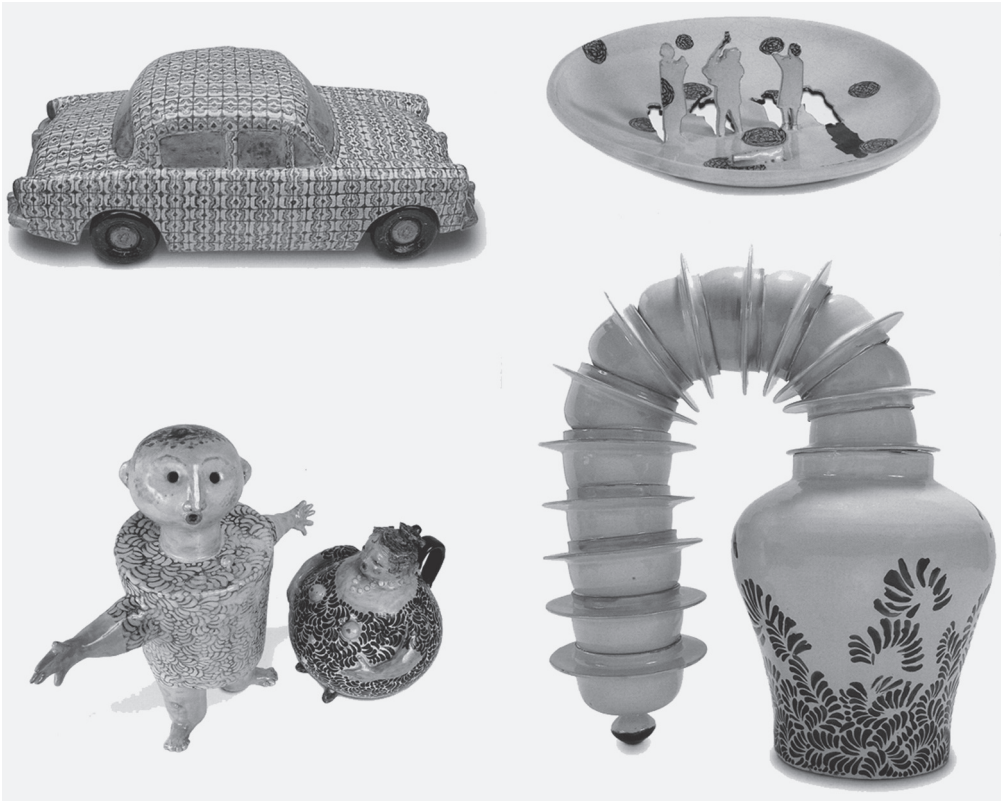

FIG. 21.3 Exhibition, Alarca, 'Talavera Contemporánea', July 2007, Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City. Photograph Talavera de la Reyna, 2007.

manufacturing technique has comfortably taken on the challenge of globalisation. Its appeal to the young and old, upper and middle classes, Mexicans and tourists, has secured it economically.

The boost to the industry has been remarkable in the last twenty-five years. Moreno's workshop has not been the only one to benefit. The Uriarte Talavera workshop has also seized the opportunity to collaborate with contemporary artists, and with the Universidad de las Américas-Puebla and the Culture Ministry of Puebla. Uriarte, one of the oldest workshops established in Puebla, invited artists to work with its artisans for an exhibition entitled 'Talavera Contemporánea', which was a great success: the Puebla Minister of Culture, Pedro Ángel Palou Gracia, and the dean of the Universidad de las Américas, Enrique Cardenas Sánchez, both praised Talavera as central to Puebla's identity, as well as its potential to move beyond traditional functions as objects of use and to be reinvented by contemporary artists to suit the demands of the future.[25] A large traditional Talavera plate, for instance, became an ideal canvas for one of Mexico's great surrealist painters, Rudolfo Morales. His imagery, deeply rooted in folklore, depicts women from his village – the work is entitled 'Las Mujeres de mi Pueblo' – floating among buildings and churches typical of Mexican small towns (Plate 19). Similarly, Jan Hendrix, a prominent Dutch artist living in Mexico, used the traditional shapes of Talavera for his striking construction of a monochrome landscape. The composition consists of bowls, cups, jars, jugs and plates, placed in unusual positions, and linked together to form a unit through the design of white branches set against a black background (Fig. 21.4). Both works strongly illustrate how tradition can be adapted into the language of modernism.

FIG. 21.4 Jan Hendrix, 'Naturaleza', from the exhibition 'Talavera Contemporánea', Puebla, November 1999. Photograph Jan Hendrix.

Another workshop which has been successful in experimenting with contemporary patterns and forms is that of Fernanda Gamboa, Talavera Santa Catarina in Cholula, which has developed a large network and is reaching out to markets beyond Mexico. Gamboa, currently a member of Puebla's Regulatory Council, co-operates closely with Margarita de Orellana and Alberto Ruy Sánchez, the owners of *Artes de México*, one of the most prestigious art magazines of Mexico, which has dedicated several issues to the significance of Talavera as an important artform, rooted firmly in Mexican culture.

Apart from individuals in Puebla, institutions and publications have been crucial to enhancing the status and standing of Talavera as a product. The Franz Mayer Museum is now one of the most prestigious museums in Mexico, situated in the historic centre of Mexico City, and since opening its refurbished galleries in 2004 it has attracted ever-increasing numbers of visitors, averaging two hundred thousand a year.[26] Seminars, exhibitions and publications sponsored by the museum have been instrumental in disseminating the knowledge and history of Talavera in the colonial period. These intellectual endeavours have been particularly important for the museum's collection of Talavera. Its 726 pieces are used for research and have provided ample material for publications.

In the new Talavera gallery the display is chronological, and interjected with pieces that have influenced production in Mexico. The transfer of the tin-glaze technique from Islamic Spain marks the beginning of the story, which unfolds with a number of large lustre dishes from Manises used as comparators to polychrome production in Mexico. The variety of decorative motifs derived from Spain and Italy are juxtaposed with pieces influenced by Chinese wares, which arrived on the Manila galleons from the Philippines. Large jars and basins from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries used in convents and churches in Puebla are prominently displayed. It is a humbling experience to see how the potters, working in the simple technique of tin-glazed earthenware, were able to reach such heights of artistic achievement in the colonial, republican and national eras. There is no doubt that since its opening the Franz Mayer Museum has been the epicentre for spreading knowledge about Talavera as something old but prestigious, that can co-exist alongside the new.

Artes de México, a top-quality, prestigious, high-profile journal specialising in the arts, crafts and culture of Mexico has been an important platform for Talavera. It has a wide circulation, distributed internationally, with a print run of 60,000 a year: five issues annually, 12,000 copies per issue.[27] *Artes de México* has had considerable impact in giving exposure to Talavera, albeit among the urban elite. Its third issue, *La Talavera de Puebla*, was published in 1989. Since then it has attracted so much interest that a second dedicated issue was published in 1995. Several other issues have been devoted to Puebla and its architecture, indicating that the editors consider Talavera an important artform in contemporary Mexico.[28]

The trend has been established for all workshops at all levels of quality to benefit in the new climate. Even the smaller family-run businesses have been affected by the increased demand for Talavera. Their products, following the traditional rules of production, are nevertheless cheaper than the larger enterprises, such as Uriarte Talavera, Talavera de la Reyna and Talavera Santa Catarina. These family workshops, such as La Trinidad, now take orders and commissions for entire dining sets and individual objects, directly from the consumer. Puebla has become the established destination for tourists who purchase Talavera, which is now perceived as a recognised speciality of the town, its quintessential trademark.

NOTES

1 Castañada y Alcover 1958: 47.

2 Villa Sánchez 1997: 42.

3 Secretaria de Cultura del Estado de Puebla 1999: 38–39.

4 See further Oliveras y Alberu 2005.

5 The eighth article was the most extensive of the 1653 Ordinances. It outlined in great detail the regulations for manufacturing the pottery. See Cervantes 1939: 23–25.

6 The Mexican government published a series of declarations in 1997 and 1998 that defined the term 'Talavera' as an authentic trademark of Puebla: 'Declaratoria general de protección de la denominación de origin Talavera', *Diario oficial de la Federación* 528, no 9 (11 September 1997), 2–7; 'Proyecto de norma official Mexicana NOM-132-SCFI-1998 Talavera especificaciones', *Diario oficial de la Federación* 534, no 20 (27 March 1998), 113–27, 'Norma oficial mexicana NOM-132-SCFI-1998, Talavera-especificaciones', *Diario oficial de la Federación*, no 18 (25 November 1998), 26–48.

7 See Cervantes 1939: 23. Article three of the 1653 Ordinances decreed that 'Blacks, Mulattos or persons of mixed colour of skin were not eligible'.

8 In order to preserve and regulate Talavera's production methods according to the 'Denomination of Origin and the Official Mexican Norm NOM 132-SCFI 1998 TALAVERA' compliances, the 'Consejo Regulador de Talavera' (CRTAL) was created as a non-profit, impartial body. It was licensed and approved by Mexico's Ministry of Economy to certify the norm. See the essay by María Teresa Arenas in *Alarca* 2005: 144.

9 These were: Uriarte Talavera, Casa Padierna, Talavera la Concepción, La Trinidad, César Torres and Talavera de la Reyna.

10 These are: César Torres (run by César Torres Ramírez); Talavera la Concepción (José Luis Guevara); Uriarte Talavera (owned by a businessman from Mexico City, Rafael Sacal, supervised by Isauro Uriarte); Talavera Casa Celia (María de los Angeles Camacho Vaca); Talavera Santa Catarina (Fernanda Gamboa); Talavera de la Nueva España (José Juan Berra Minutti); Talavera de las Américas (Ana María Cazeres Campos); Talavera

Armado (Armado Pérez Domínguez); Talavera de la Reyna (Angélica Moreno); Talavera de la Luz (Andrés Román); and Talavera Virgilio (Virgilio Pérez). This list was made in 2008, and may have changed today.

11 Information from an interview with Jorge Guevara, Puebla, February 2008. Since early 2011 Guevara's niece has taken over the workshop in Puebla.

12 Mauldin 2003: 293.

13 List of workshops drawn up by myself in June 2008.

14 Personal interview with Jorge Guevara, Puebla, February 2008.

15 Alarca 2005: 141.

16 Personal interview with Angélica Moreno, Puebla, February 2007.

17 Connors McQuade 1999: 31, Pls 7–11.

18 Arenas Prósperi lists 20 artists in the catalogue, Alarca 2005: 143, published in celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the foundation of Angélica Moreno's workshop; see also Fane 2000: 294.

19 Contreras Castro 1999: 72.

20 Contreras Castro 1999: 72.

21 Contreras Castro 1999: 76.

22 Contreras Castro 1999: 75–76.

23 At the Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City (July to September 2007); in Spain, at the Museo Cerámica in Barcelona (May to September 2007), the Museo Nacional de Cerámica y Artes Suntuarias González Martí in Valencia (September 2007 to January 2008), the Museo de América in Madrid (January to May 2008); in China, at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing (June to July 2006).

24 Information obtained from personal interviews with a number of affluent Mexicans between 2006 and 2009.

25 Secretaria de Cultura de Estado de Puebla 1999: 129.

26 Information obtained by the Director of the Museo Franz Mayer, Hector Rivero Borrell, on 24 September 2009.

27 See http://www.artesdemexico.com.

28 Ruy Sánchez-Lacy 1995: 73.

PART 7

STUDIES IN LUSTREWARE

22

THE LION, THE HARE AND LUSTREWARE

FAHMIDA SULEMAN

Some of my fondest memories of studying Islamic art and archaeology at Oxford were the object-handling sessions conducted by James Allan and Julian Raby at the Ashmolean Museum. 'Use both hands please, and always lift the object over the table,' the dynamic duo would say to us. Little did I know how influential these sessions would be for my future research and career. From Mosul metalwork to Iznik pottery, we were not only encouraged to feel the surfaces and discuss techniques of production of the artefacts, but also to explore their social history, visual iconography and cultural significance. As a tribute to James, a truly great teacher, this essay investigates the iconography of an eleventh-century lustre-painted bowl produced in Fatimid Egypt, and offers insights into its sources of inspiration and possible use as a medium of oral literature.

The close association between literature and ceramics is well attested in the medieval Persian-speaking world. The tenth century witnessed the profusion of the elegant black and white epigraphic wares from Samanid Iran and Central Asia. Executed in sharp, rhythmic calligraphy, the inscriptions on these vessels range from benedictory phrases and moral aphorisms to quotations from Prophetic *hadith* and the sayings of Imam 'Ali.[1] The interactions between literature and pottery achieved even greater heights with the invention in Iran of the *mina'i* technique in the twelfth century. Here, the smooth, white ceramic vessels became true canvases for multicoloured stories featuring epic heroes, like the legendary king Bahram Gur, and ancient tales such as that of the star-crossed lovers Bizhan and Manizha. Scholars argue that these vessels may have functioned as entertainment devices passed around and admired by dinner guests, or used to re-tell

the stories depicted on them.[2] Their painterly quality also suggests a direct link to now-lost contemporary manuscript painting traditions.

In comparison, literary material from the medieval Arab world is rather scanty. The stylised imagery on lustre ceramics from Abbasid Iraq featuring single figures, birds and animals is difficult to interpret as literary vignettes. Some unglazed water filters from Fatimid Egypt feature short aphorisms in Arabic, although their relatively crude execution and limited range cannot be compared to the accomplished Samanid epigraphic wares.[3] However, a number of Egyptian lustre-painted ceramics produced in the tenth and eleventh centuries are executed with a high degree of sophistication in their decoration, while their iconographic repertoire possesses a narrative quality unlike their Iraqi forerunners.

Many lustre ceramics from the Fatimid period include depictions of animals interacting with human figures, such as the oft-published bowls featuring a cockfight,[4] or a giraffe and groom.[5] However, another lustre bowl (now in the al-Sabah Collection in Kuwait) depicting a lion juxtaposed with a hare (or rabbit), has received little scholarly attention, perhaps because its decoration is devoid of human figures (Fig. 22.1).[6] The bowl is unsigned, although the painter has displayed considerable skill in line drawing and employing the reserve-painting technique. The bowl has flaring sides and a slightly everted rim with a diameter of 27cm; its earthenware body is covered with an opaque white tin-glaze and painted in a coppery brown lustre. Through style and technique it is datable to the eleventh century.[7] In this essay, I will explore the significance of this object and argue that its iconography was inspired by contemporary fable literature.

The central motif, painted in reserve, is a lion posed *passant* to the left with a raised right paw and its tail coiled around the left back paw. Its curly mane is rendered as a cluster of small swirls, and the painter has indicated patches of fur with fine strokes and dots of lustre paint. The lion's sharp teeth and claws are carefully depicted, as are the details of its eyes and the dots representing whisker-pores around its mouth. Centred above the lion is a hare leaping from its hind legs in the opposite direction to the lion.[8] Like the larger beast, the hare is drawn in reserve against a solid lustre background with the details of its physiognomy and fur painted in fine lines of lustre. Also painted in reserve in the areas around the lion and hare are five sprays of palmette stalks.

The solid lustre background is limited to the base of the bowl, and a restored and repainted inscription painted in lustre over the white glaze encircles its wide flaring walls. The areas between the regularly spaced elongated characters of the inscription are decorated with swirl-motifs, and the edge of the rim is embellished with a thick border of lustre. The inscription is problematic as Sue Kaoukji, curator of the al-Sabah Collection, has observed: 'it is very obvious that the rim, therefore the inscription, has been tampered with.'[9] The inscription remains to be deciphered. Before the bowl was acquired by the al-Sabah Collection, Jean Soustiel published it in a black and white

photograph taken after its restoration but prior to the repainting of the inscription (Fig. 22.2a); this image allows us to distinguish the general areas of repainting from the original elements of the inscription (Fig. 22.2b).[10] By comparing the black and white image with the fully restored bowl, it is immediately apparent that the repainted inscription is not faithful to the original lettering. In fact, parts of the inscription appear to have been invented by the restorer and are thus misleading. Nevertheless, I shall attempt to decipher the inscription and consider how it might aid us in interpreting the bowl's iconography.

FIG. 22.1 Lustre bowl depicting a lion and hare. Egypt, eleventh century. The al-Sabah Collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait, LNS167C. Photograph © the al-Sabah Collection.

a

b

FIG. 22.2 Lion and hare lustre bowl. a) photo taken post-restoration but prior to repainting of inscription. b) approximate areas of repainting. Both after Soustiel 1985.

ICONOGRAPHY AND INSCRIPTION ON THE LION AND HARE BOWL

Scholars have argued that the iconography on this bowl may represent a hunting scene. Scenes of animal combat and hunting are common in medieval Islamic art and architecture, such as on the famous eighth-century floor mosaic at Khirbat al-Mafjar, showing a lion attacking a gazelle. Hares and lions are commonly depicted in Islamic art, either as single elements or as part of a hunting scene. However, hares tend to be the target of large birds of prey, whereas lions are depicted in combat with larger beasts such as gazelle, deer and cattle.[11] In contrast, the lion on our lustre bowl seems not to have been depicted as an aggressor chasing after the pot-bellied hare. The painter has chosen to depict two animals that are extreme opposites of each other in terms of their size and natural instinct: one, a large, strong and ferocious carnivore; the other a small, swift but harmless herbivore. This makes the juxtaposition of the hare with the lion all the more intriguing.

According to Esin Atıl, the iconography on this bowl is inspired by a specific medieval Arabic animal fable, which helps to explain the unlikely combination of these two creatures as the main protagonists of this scene:

> The vignette becomes more meaningful when associated with the popular literature of the age, the *Kalila and Dimna* [tales]… which used animals to enact stories teaching princes how to rule wisely, with compassion and justice…One story describes how a mighty lion was outwitted by a clever hare, demonstrating that raw power is no match for cunning. According to the text, the hare tricks the lion into believing that another lion is in the pond, ready to snatch his meal (the hare). Without realising that what he sees is his own reflection, the lion jumps into the pond to attack his rival and drowns. The hare thus saves himself from being devoured. The lustre-painted bowl represents a condensed version of the story with the hare (physically and symbolically) placed over the lion.[12]

The *Kalila wa Dimna* stories, compiled and translated into Arabic from Pahlavi by Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d.758–60) in the eighth century, were well-known tales that are very likely to have been illustrated during the Fatimid period. The earliest precisely dated Arabic manuscript of the *Kalila wa Dimna* is a Mamluk manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, dated 1354 (Plate 20);[13] however, a Greek manuscript of animal fables produced in Southern Italy between 980 and 1050, which appears to have been heavily influenced by an Arabic prototype, strongly suggests a contemporary Fatimid tradition of *Kalila wa Dimna* manuscripts.[14] Furthermore, illustrations of the *Kalila wa Dimna* fables, depicting the tales of 'The raven holding a rat's tail' and 'The lion and its mother', have been found among the fragments of the Cairo Geniza documents.[15]

Ibn al-Muqaffa"s Arabic rendition of 'The tale of the lion and the hare', referred to by Atıl, was adapted from the original collection of sixth-century Pahlavi fables

compiled by the Persian author, Burzoe who in turn relied on a corpus of older Sanskrit fables, including the *Panchatantra*. We are able to trace the longevity of this particular fable thanks to the discovery of an eighth-century fresco depicting episodes of this tale, at Panjikent, near Samarqand, painted at the same period that Ibn al-Muqqafa' was compiling his corpus.[16] An illustration of this tale in an Indian context also appears on a moulded terracotta plaque from the tenth-century temple of Paharpur in Bengal.[17] It is therefore reasonable to speculate that this popular tale of the lion and the clever hare also inspired lustre potters of the Fatimid period. If this is indeed the case, then this bowl represents the earliest known example of an illustrated *Kalila wa Dimna* fable on Islamic pottery. This identification would further substantiate the existence of a well-developed tradition of illustrated *Kalila wa Dimna* manuscripts in the Fatimid period.

However, there is a problem with Atıl's hypothesis, since the inscription on this bowl does not appear to derive from Ibn al-Muqaffa"s Arabic fable. As mentioned, parts of the inscription have been repainted, and in some instances altered from the original. We must therefore rely on Soustiel's black and white photograph as our starting point (Fig. 22.2a). One possible reading of the incomplete and highly stylised lettering is (starting at 12 o'clock): *fa'alaykumā fa-/qa-… -k man fukka min fi'li-hi ka-mā fa-… -ā fukka (?)-kumā*.[18] The following translation may be postulated: 'So it is incumbent upon both of you/there hangs over the two of you… the one who is released by his/its action; just as… [will be] released… of the two of you.'[19] If we base our reading on the repainted inscription (Fig. 22.1), what emerges may be read as follows (starting at five o'clock): *kamā fa'altumā*[20] *(i)nṣāfukumā*[21] *fa-'alaykumā qaḍā'un fukka man fukka min fi'li-hi*. We might read here, 'As the two of you do/have done, so rests your justice (*inṣāfukumā*); a judgement hangs over you both whereby whomsoever (it wills) will be released.' Both of these readings are somewhat problematic, and should be considered as suggested readings, since we do not know for certain if the initial restoration involved any repainting. Analysing the bowl's two-phased restoration simply by comparing the earlier and later images, it is clear that a major change has been effected by the repainting of a third of the bowl (the part of the inscription between 12 and four o'clock).

Although the first reading of the inscription is incomplete and the second one based on an unreliable restoration, they both nevertheless appear to be proverbial or moralistic statements – something that is commonly found appended to the end of a fable. Unfortunately, a proverb or moral message similar to the one on the bowl does not occur in 'The tale of the lion and hare' as adapted and translated by Ibn al-Muqaffa'. This does not rule out the possibility that the image on this bowl may allude to the famous lion and hare story from *Kalila wa Dimna*, in which case the painter may have chosen a moral message that transcends this or any particular fable. Furthermore, there were

other literary sources available during this period that contained proverbial messages, such as medieval bestiaries or *adab*-style animal encyclopaedias, like the popular *Kitab al-hayawan* of al-Jahiz.[22] Indeed, selections from the *Fables of Aesop* were also translated into Arabic and could equally have inspired the painters of this bowl, though our present state of knowledge does not allow us to substantiate this.[23]

A more convincing alternative source of an illustrated manuscript with animals produced in Fatimid Egypt is based on a restored but fragmentary drawing on paper found among the Fustat fragments, now housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.[24] On one side of the page is a lion (Fig. 22.3) sketched in ink and coloured pigments, which is placed almost vertically on the page with its tail curled around its left back paw, similar to the lion on the lustre bowl. The draughtsman has included details such as the animal's claws and dotted whisker pores, while short strokes of ink are used to indicate the lion's fur, mane and underbelly. The three lines of Arabic script placed above the lion have been partially read as, *bismillāh al-raḥman al-raḥim / dhakara wa… Ka'b al-Aḥbār 'an manṭiq al-waḥsh… /…li-l-asad li-qawli-hi*. This could translate as,'In the name of God the Merciful the Compassionate/Ka'b al-Ahbar narrated and…

FIG. 22.3 'Lion' (verso of 'Hare', Fig. 22.4), ink and pigments on paper, eleventh–twelfth century, Egypt, 15.3 by 12cm, from a ms of *Mantiq al-Wahsh*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1954 (54.108.3) © 2012. Image copyright the Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/ Scala, Florence.

through the speech of wild animals… /… the lion for the purpose of his teaching.' The damaged inscription below the lion is indecipherable.

On the reverse of the page is a lively drawn image of a hare in motion with its head turned backwards and its right front paw slightly raised (Fig. 22.4).[25] The artist has added strokes of fur along the long ears of the hare that recall the similarly detailed long ears of the hare on the lustre bowl. On this side of the fragment, which may be the title page, the two-lined inscription reads, *Kitāb fi-hi manṭiq al-waḥsh /bi-'amrin malīḥin muṣ awwarin*. This translates as, 'A book containing the speech of the wild animals/in finely illustrated form.'[26]

Ernst Grube identified this fragment as 'the first page of the original manuscript: *Book on the Speech of Wild Animals*,' and that the name of the Yemeni author, Ka'b al-Ahbar, appears on what he deduced was the verso side of the page.[27] According to Grube, 'This treatise quite clearly stands in the classical tradition of zoological handbooks which were almost always illustrated with such animal figures.'[28] However, we face two major obstacles in substantiating the authorship and nature of the *Book on the Speech of Wild Animals*. First, the seventh-century figure Ka'b al-Ahbar (d.652/3),

FIG. 22.4 'Hare' (verso of 'Lion', Fig. 22.3), ink and pigments on paper, eleventh–twelfth century, Egypt, 15.3 by 12cm, from a ms of *Mantiq al-Wahsh*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1954 (54.108.3) © 2012. Image copyright the Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence.

a Jewish convert who according to later tradition was a close associate of the caliphs 'Umar (d.644) and 'Uthman (d.656), acquired a semi-legendary status after his death. Later writers, such as al-Jahiz, have attributed religious material and several works of 'wisdom literature' to Ka'b, although none of these attributions can be proven with any material evidence.[29] Second, the work in question, *Mantiq al-wahsh*, appears not to have survived, with the exception of this fragmentary page from Fatimid Egypt. We therefore cannot fully understand the nature or purpose of this text. We can surmise that the work is more akin to fable literature, like the *Kalila wa Dimna*, rather than a quasi-zoological text, like *Kitab al-hayawan*, if we simply consider that it includes talking beasts.

Given that works attributed to Ka'b al-Ahbar belong to the genre of wisdom literature and that the opening lines of this fragment reveal the author's intention to instruct 'through the speech of wild animals', we can argue that this is another example of a fable manuscript produced in Egypt. Not only were the fables in this and other manuscripts available to medieval Egyptians for their listening and reading pleasure, they also provided visual enjoyment when accompanied by illustrations. It is noteworthy that a hare and lion are depicted on the title and first pages of this manuscript. This may indicate that the two beasts play a narrative role in the book, or perhaps that the fable involving these two characters was one of the primary tales – though their pairing on this fragment could, of course, be purely fortuitous. What we can gather from the investigation of this fragment and the illustrated *Kalila wa Dimna* tales is that lustre painters of the Fatimid period also drew inspiration for their designs from popular literature of the age. For the consumers of this pottery, these images must have had an immediate resonance on several levels, ranging from the purely aesthetic to the narrative and proverbial levels that are now mostly lost to us.

A small lustre-painted bowl from the Louvre Museum, Paris, datable to tenth-century Abbasid Iraq, bears a striking similarity to the iconography on the Egyptian bowl (Fig. 22.5).[30] In the centre, a stylised lion passant faces to the right and a long-eared hare with a long tail leaps above him in the same direction.[31] The animals are painted on an opaque white tin-glazed ceramic body with their facial details painted in reserve. The rim of the bowl has a simple scalloped design and the plain areas surrounding the animals include short words and phrases in Arabic. The most easily recognisable phrase is *baraka li-sahibi-hi* (blessings to the owner), beginning from the lion's left raised paw and ending above the hare's tail.[32] According to Alan Caiger-Smith and others, images on Abbasid lustre ceramics often conveyed messages of good fortune.[33] This notion is confirmed by the inclusion of the blessing on the Louvre bowl. Like the Egyptian lion and hare bowl, the Iraqi lustre bowl with its mixture of text and image may have been inspired by an illustrated fable, embodying

FIG. 22.5 Small lion and hare lustre bowl, Iraq, tenth century, diameter 12.8cm. Louvre, Paris, MAO18. Photograph © 2005 Photo RMN/Jean-Gilles Berizzi.

a timeless story and also conveying good wishes to its owner. Is it too conjectural to suggest that the bowl's small dimensions were meant to fit comfortably in little hands? These images may represent not only universal symbols of power and triumph in association with the chase, but they may also evoke contemporary fable narratives, and thus, the pottery itself may have been used in this capacity as a medium for retelling oral literature.[34]

NOTES

1 For a recent study see Pancaroğlu 2002.

2 See, for example, Simpson 1981.

3 *Trésors* 1998: 181, cat. nos 128–33.

4 Keir Collection, inv. no 88. This bowl is discussed in Suleman 2012a (forthcoming).

5 Benaki Collection, Athens, inv. no 749. This bowl is discussed in Suleman 2012b (forthcoming).

6 First published by Soustiel 1985: 133, no 149; later by Atıl 1990: 122–23, cat. no 30 (inv. no LNS167C); Atıl 1994: 15–16; Watson 2004: 274–75.

7 Atıl 1990: 122. I wish to thank Sue Kaoukji for providing me with valuable information and bibliography on this bowl. The eleventh century seems a likely date on the basis that the painting in reserve is similar to lustre designs produced by the atelier of the eleventh-century painter Muslim ibn al-Dahhan, on whom see most recently Meinecke-Berg 1999.

8 Whether the animal depicted is a hare (*arnab waḥshiyya*) or a rabbit (*arnab baladiyya*) is unclear: in Arabic fable literature the term employed is simply *arnab*. Due to its long furry ears and for the sake of brevity I will refer to it as a hare throughout.

9 According to Kaoukji, 'The bowl was previously broken and restored prior to its acquisition by the Museum in 1980, and no details of its previous restoration are known. There is considerable airbrush and hand painting, and one small area of fill on the rim appears to have shrunk' (personal communication, fax dated 4 August 2002). The bowl was acquired from an auction in Paris in December 1980, and from 1990 it toured for 13 years as part of the exhibition, 'Islamic Art and Patronage: Treasures from Kuwait' (see Atıl 1990). It will be displayed again when the Kuwait National Museum reopens in 2012.

10 As I have been unable to examine this bowl in person, I cannot deduce whether any repainting was already carried out during the initial restoration of the piece as published by Soustiel. As parts of the bowl appear blank in the black and white photograph, I have assumed that very little if any repainting was undertaken at that time. See Soustiel 1985: 133, who does not attempt to read the inscription.

11 See the famous ivory frame at the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin (inv. no 16375), showing a falcon attacking a hare (near top right) and a lion biting into a deer (near bottom left). See also the wooden panel inlaid with ivory from the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo (inv. no 3180), with a falcon attacking a hare. Both are illustrated in *Trésors* 1998: 138, cat. no 81; 92, cat. no 10.

12 Atıl 1994: 15–16.

13 The Bodleian *Kalila wa Dimna* (MS Pococke 400, vocalised in the manuscript throughout as *Kulayla wa Dimna*) was transcribed by Muhammad ibn Ahmad in 1354. The illustrations of this manuscript are published with an abridged translation by Atıl 1981a. See Ward's discussion on the dating of other *Kalila wa Dimna* manuscripts based on the Bodleian manuscript in Ward 1981: especially 8–9.

14 Raby 1987–88. For a direct reference to the *Kalila wa Dimna* tales from Fatimid court literature during the time of the Caliph al-'Aziz see Viré 1967: 9–10.

15 For an illustration of 'The lion and its mother', see Walzer 1957. Walzer dates it to the Mamluk period. The tale of 'The raven holding a rat's tail' is undated and unpublished: see Goitein 1988: 43.

16 Raby 1987–88: 387–89, Fig. 9.

17 Raby 1987–88: 392, Fig. 17.

18 The character resembling a *mim* joined with an *alif*, has been identified alternately as *ma* (what), *min* (from), or *man* (who). This reading is justified if we compare the Kufic epigraphy from the mosques of al-Azhar (tenth century), al-Aqmar (twelfth century) and Kairouan (eleventh century), in which the words *min* and *ma* maintain similar forms. See the studies by Flury 1936: especially 369–73; Marçais 1925: Pl. 9; Saifuddin 2000: 136, 139.

19 I would like to thank Dr Alain George, Professor Geert Jan van Gelder, and especially Dr Nadia Jamil for their helpful comments and suggestions on the bowl's inscription. The readings presented are based on an examination of pictures only, as I have not yet handled the bowl in person and a careful reading of the object itself may alter my interpretation. It is hoped that the suggestions offered here will generate further discussions on the inscription and iconography of this bowl.

20 The letter *'ayn* in *fa'altumā* has been postulated from the shrunken letter next to the elongated *lam*. Sue Kaoukji confirmed in a personal correspondence (4 August 2002) that 'one small area of the fill on the rim appears to have shrunk'.

21 The reading of the first letter *alif* in *inṣāfukumā* has been interpreted as a case of haplology, the sharing of one letter, often an *alif*, between two words, which is a common phenomenon in medieval Arabic manuscripts. Here the last letter *alif* in *fa'altumā* is shared as the first letter of the word *inṣāfukumā*. I would like to thank Dr Nadia Jamil for her suggestions and comments on this aspect of the inscription.

22 Al-Jahiz's *Kitab al-Hayawan* (*The Book of Animals*) was widely read in the medieval Islamic world and was probably illustrated by the eleventh century, although the only extant copies of illuminated manuscripts that have come down to us originate from the Mamluk period.

23 Not all the Arabic translations of Aesop's fables are known to us, but a selection has been edited by Professor Franz Rosenthal: see Rosenthal 1989. Although several of these fables include a lion and other animals, they do not include a hare or rabbit. However, Professor Geert Jan van Gelder informed me in a personal communication (26 June 2002) that there is an Aesopic fable involving a lion and hare (though apparently not translated into Arabic). He writes, '[In this tale the] lion has a chance to catch the hare but disdains it, chasing bigger game – in vain, thus ending up with nothing… The picture could illustrate this fable: the hare escaping, and the lion looking at bigger game, invisible to the left.' I would like to thank Professor van Gelder for this intriguing and plausible suggestion.

24 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no 54.108.3: see *Trésors* 1998: 99, cat. no 15.

25 This side of the page has only been published in black and white and in its unrestored state: Grube 1963: Pl. 3, Fig. 7.

26 The use of the term *bi-'amrin* is somewhat unconventional and has been translated here loosely as in form or state. I wish to thank Dr Nadia Jamil for her comments and suggestions on my reading.

27 Grube 1963: 93.

28 Grube 1963: 93.

29 Schmitz, 'Ka'b al-Aḥbār' (EI²). According to Professor van Gelder (personal communication, 10 June 2002), 'The work mentioned on the manuscript fragment, *Manṭiq al-waḥsh*, 'The speech of wild animals', is not known to me. Of course it is not by Ka'b Ibn al-Ahbar, who wrote no books and to whom a lot of material is ascribed.'

30 Louvre, inv. no MAO18 (Alphonse Kann bequest). Published with an incorrect date and provenance by Pézard 1920: 245, Col. Pl. 122.

31 It is difficult to ascertain the areas of restoration and repainting on this bowl from the photograph, however Pézard describes its condition in the catalogue as 'excellente conservation'. He identifies the smaller animal as a hare ('lièvre') and the large animal as a lion or a leopard ('lion ou le guépard'). See Pézard 1920: 245.

32 The visual separation of this phrase between *li-sa-* and *-hibi-hi* is a convention often seen on lustre ceramics of this period. The other words include *min* or *man* written twice on opposite ends of the bowl, and an unidentifiable word across from the *hibi-hi*, which may be pseudo-epigraphic and added for symmetry. Two other unidentifiable words are written under each animal. For comparison see the lustre dish published in Mouliérac 1999: 58.

33 Caiger-Smith 1985: 31–33.

34 A lustre bowl produced in twelfth-century Ayyubid Syria with a related design to the Egyptian lion-and-hare bowl features a lion and a fox (or jackal) that may also refer to the tales of *Kalila wa Dimna*: see Grube 1994: 262–63, cat. no 297 (inv. no POT1249).

23

SAID EL SADR (1909–86) AND FATIMID LUSTREWARE: A SUCCESSION

ALAN CAIGER-SMITH

During our first meeting in 1969 Said el Sadr said, 'In Egypt we have an important school of ceramics.[1] It began here at Fustat eight centuries ago. It is truly Islamic and it is also universal… I develop this vision.' The Fatimid ceramics to which he was referring are well known to scholars of Islamic art (Plate 9, Fig. 22.1),[2] though perhaps generally less well known in the West than other Islamic ceramic traditions. El Sadr gained a wide knowledge of the traditional architecture and decorative arts in Egypt from the hands-on teaching of the influential Hajj Osman and the Romanian artist Jean Pontilla when he was a student in Cairo during the 1920s.[3] At that time few people considered these arts to be worthy of serious attention. He also used to collect fragments of Fatimid and other ceramics which littered the ground at Fustat at a time when most people regarded them as rubbish. To him, they were not merely intriguing finds from a bygone era but an expression of a still-valid creative imagination. He knew that the artistic traditions of Fatimid society had been 'prevented', as he used to say, by the Ayyubid *coup d'état* in the late twelfth century, but he regarded this simply as one of the many 'interruptions' in the artistic life of the people. 'First came the Ptolemies, then the Romans, then the Ottomans and afterwards the French and the English and now the Russians.' When he said, 'I develop this vision,' it was much more than a personal commitment; as I have described elsewhere, he felt that he represented an age-old impulse in the hearts of the people.[4]

The range of el Sadr's work was extensive – the illustrations here can only begin to indicate its scope (Plates 21–23).[5] Starting as a painter and sculptor, he eventually

committed the greater part of his energies to ceramics, inspired especially by the colour, glazes and motifs of Fatimid ceramics of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and in particular by Fatimid lustreware. The way in which he responded to this stimulus was unusual, to say the least. He believed in something on-going: succession rather than revival. He deeply admired the figurative golden and red lustres of the Fatimid era and occasionally borrowed images from them (Plate 22), but the greater part of his work came, as theirs had done, from his own imagination and his direct response to the living world around him. It belonged to the twentieth century; it was much more than a recapitulation.

Perhaps he was fortunate in having to rediscover the technique of lustre for himself, since no vestige of the old tradition remained after a gap of several centuries. Starting with experiments on copper and silver slips under a clear glaze, he records in his book *Medinat al-Fukhar* (*Town of the Potters)*,[6] how he accidentally arrived at the method of applying the slips to the surface of a fired glaze and developing lustre by an additional firing, with reduction, at low temperature. Once he had hit upon this method – which was the one normally used by historical lustre makers – he extended it by employing it over a wide variety of clear and coloured glazes as well as glazes opacified with tin. He was inspired by the Fatimid masters' use of human and animal images, and he loved to draw from life, but there was no precedent for the way in which he converted his ideas into ceramic vessels. Though he also enjoyed making pots for day-to-day use, he was mainly interested in ceramics as a form of artistic thought and expression: for him, the making of each piece was a unique event; each completed work was a focus of stored energy.

In his ceramics, birds and beasts and human figures featured as free-standing images in their own right, not as elements in a decorative composition as was customary in Fatimid times; in his work even plants and foliage were usually accorded an independent presence of their own. The figures were often portrayed on a large scale, occupying most of the surface area of the pot. They were boldly and impulsively painted, sometimes over lines incised with a scalpel in the leather-hard clay, which emphasised the three-dimensionality of the thrown shape. He liked also to incise the unfired lustre slip with the pointed handle of a brush, adding detail to a broadly defined image.

One of the innovations which especially pleased him was the combination of red lustre and turquoise glaze (Plate 23), which is usually considered impossible because in reduction the copper in a soda glaze turns the glaze itself to red. He achieved it by means of a reduction firing which turned the entire vessel to red, and then he painted on it with molten wax. After this, the vessel was immersed in dilute hydrofluoric acid, which etched away the reduced surface of the glaze revealing the turquoise glaze beneath, except where it had been masked by the wax. The wax covering was then removed in

boiling water, leaving a striking golden-red image against the turquoise ground. 'This you have never seen!' he said to me with delight. Characteristically, he never mentioned that hydrofluoric acid is highly dangerous: health and safety regulations would have seemed to him absurd.

It may be the case that Fatimid lustre painters did not make their own pots but bought them in, already glazed, since the quality of the potting seldom matches the quality of the decoration. In contrast to this historic workshop practice, el Sadr loved working in clay, both as potter and as sculptor. He always threw the pots himself and visualised the work as a whole right from the start. In the course of time the scale of his upright forms increased to match his generous attitude to drawing. Some of these forms were far larger than could be thrown from a single lump of clay (Fig. 23.1). From his neighbours, the artisan potters of Fustat, he learnt to produce large, tall vessels in stages, either by adding coils of clay to the primary form or by assembling a form from several thrown units and completing it by further manipulation on the wheel. This process had been current among traditional potters from Pharaonic times, but was seldom if ever used for glazed vessels in the Fatimid era. The most frequent Fatimid forms were bowls, which especially suited their images and decorative compositions. El Sadr certainly enjoyed making bowls and dishes, for he produced a good many of them; but his instincts as a sculptor made him happiest working on more fully three-dimensional upright forms, some of which were as much as three feet high. His

FIG. 23.1 Said el Sadr, tall pot with girl and animal, 66cm high (about 1976). Museum of Islamic Ceramics, Zamalek, Cairo.

devotion to the legacy of the Fatimid lustre masters was constant; their example inspired him, but he had no desire to imitate them or to adopt their preferred vessel forms, but rather, as he said, 'to develop their vision' in his own terms.

In all the arts, and certainly in ceramic lustre, the legacy of the past is both an inspiration and a restriction. The lustres of Kashan, of the Spanish tradition or the Italian Renaissance incorporated so many ideas and were so outstanding that later makers have found it difficult to free themselves from their aura. Those lustres were made for societies with an established aesthetic, and artists and artisans could fulfil their needs. The modern world is more complex and has no single, shared aesthetic language. Artists and craftsmen of the present day need to relate to people of many races and backgrounds, and they can only do so by establishing some skill and vision of their own which transcends national and historical boundaries. The language of our times lies not in any established style but in the heart, in the conviction and dedication of each individual maker. It is natural to be influenced by what you admire, but it is generally best to work from intuition rather than from earlier models, to respond to the spirit rather than to follow the letter. Innovation and tradition are not in opposition. The one grows from the other. El Sadr's work is an outstanding example.

NOTES

1 A short but fuller account of Said el Sadr's life and work can be found in Caiger-Smith 2010.

2 See, for example, Watson 2004; Soustiel 1985; Philon 1980; Grube 1976; Fehérvári 1973; Jenkins 1968a and 1986b, among other articles.

3 El Attar 1980.

4 Caiger-Smith 1995.

5 The principal public collection of el Sadr's work is in the Museum of Islamic Ceramics in Zamalek, while other pieces can be seen in the Al-Fustat Ceramics Centre in Cairo and in the Library at Alexandria.

6 El Sadr 1960.

24

POTTER'S TRAIL: AN ABU ZAYD EWER IN THE SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

OYA PANCAROĞLU

Abu Zayd, the pre-eminent name in the fine ceramic record of medieval Iran, is associated with dozens of objects which either bear his signature or could be attributed to him on the basis of style. In a recent article devoted to Abu Zayd, Sheila Blair introduced one of the most recent additions to his known corpus, a lustre-painted bowl dated Jumada II 600 (February–March 1204), which exemplifies the potter's celebrated proficiency and ingenuity.[1] Following the trail of Abu Zayd's signed and dated works spanning the period between 1186 and 1220 leads one to the natural conclusion that he was a recognised pioneer in his age, one who contributed to the refinement of the art of both lustre and *mina'i* overglaze painting while also carrying the coupling of poetic texts with ceramic vessels and tiles to a new level. This essay introduces a newly identified work of Abu Zayd – a signed and lustre-painted ewer also dated 600 (1203–4) in the collection of the Saint Louis Art Museum in St Louis, Missouri (Fig. 24.1 and Plate 24).[2] As the corpus of Abu Zayd continues to expand,[3] questions and thoughts about his art evolve concomitantly and lead us to a more nuanced understanding of the significance of innovations so intimately connected with his name. In this process, the extensive scholarship of James Allan on objects of medieval Islamic art remains as an inspirational milestone and a model to which this essay is written as a small tribute.

THE SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM EWER

The stonepaste ewer in the Saint Louis Art Museum has a cylindrical body that slightly swells out as it rises towards its rounded shoulder. From this shoulder emerge the spout and the neck that terminates in a funnel-shaped mouth, as well as a flat handle that joins the neck below the flaring of the mouth. Although the object is in a relatively good state of preservation, its spout, handle and rim are all partially restored.[4] As a closed-form vessel, the St Louis ewer is highly unusual among the known signed works of Abu Zayd, which consist predominantly of bowls, plates and tiles.[5] Several contemporary ewers of this form (or with relatively minor variations on the form) decorated in lustre and other techniques can be identified.[6] It is likely that this particular form – distinguished especially by its separation of spout and neck – was derived from prototypes in metal. Ewers with a similar disposition of spout, neck and handle are encountered among ninth- to tenth-century (Abbasid) bronze wares as well as among twelfth- to thirteenth-century inlaid metalwork from the Jazira, although the latter diverge by their typically pear-shaped bodies.[7] Just as, if not more, likely is the inspiration of Song dynasty ceramics from China which were exported to Iran and served, from the twelfth century on, as models to emulate in the local stonepaste technology that approximated the fineness and whiteness of Chinese porcelain.[8] A fine *qingbai* ware ewer of the eleventh century in the Victoria and Albert Museum makes a compelling case for the role of Chinese vessels in the production of the Iranian varieties of this ewer type; not surprisingly, the Chinese examples also appear to be modelled on metal, especially silver, wares.[9]

The decoration of the St Louis ewer consists of lustre painting on an opaque white-glaze background. Unlike a significant proportion of lustre-painted ceramics produced since the invention of the technique in Abbasid Iraq, the lustre painting on this ewer was not applied to provide dense and even coverage of the object's surface – a common practice that maximised the shimmering metallic qualities of the lustre – but is rather concentrated in two main zones: one at the bottom section of the body and the other at its upper section, through the shoulder and neck, all the way to the top, including the spout and the handle. This leaves the central section of the body as an unusually extensive zone of opaque white glaze upon which Abu Zayd placed a single line of inscription in lustre.[10] As a result, the inscription is prominently displayed and highly legible, an effect for which Abu Zayd clearly aimed on this ewer. The inscription consists of a quatrain in Persian followed by phrases in Arabic giving the name of Abu Zayd and the date.

man mihr-i tu dar miyan-i jan awardam / ba u hama khurda dar miyan awardam / akhir zi hama jahan bar awardam sar / ta 'ishq-i tu bar sar-i jahan awardam[11]
li-katibihi katabahu
Abu Zayd bi-khattihi dar[12] *sana sittami'a*

I brought your love to the midst of my soul / I discussed the smallest matters with it /
Until I overcame the entire world / In order to bring your love to the world.
[This belongs] to its writer.
Abu Zayd wrote it in his own script in the year six hundred.

In the lower zone of the body is a large Kufic inscription of good wishes in Arabic written in reserve on a background of lustre which has fine scrolls. This inscription mainly repeats the word *al-ʿizz* (glory) along with one or two instances each of *al-dawla* (good fortune) and *al-salama* (well-being). The lustre painting on the shoulder is comprised of three registers. The lowest register contains a series of plump birds with their feet on the ground and their wings in mid-flap. They are painted in lustre against a background of light scrolls. The middle register contains a chase scene moving from right to left with a cheetah, placed to the immediate left of the handle (Plate 24), pursuing three gazelles that fill the remainder of the register on either side of the spout. The cheetah

FIG. 24.1 Abu Zayd, Ewer, 600/1203–4, fritware, Saint Louis Art Museum, Museum Purchase, 65:1954.

is represented wearing a collar with a ring, indicating that it is a trained cheetah rather than a wild one.[13] The animals are painted in reserve against a background of lustre with fine scrolls. The upper register of the shoulder has another Kufic inscription, possibly the phrase *al-ʿizz al-daʿim* (perpetual glory), written in lustre and fitted tightly around the base of the neck. The neck is painted with a small-scale chain pattern. The exterior of the rim is painted in solid lustre while its interior contains Kufic-style pseudo-epigraphy. Finally, the outward-facing side of both the handle and the spout appear to have been painted with ascending palmette motifs.

THE GAZELLES AND THE CHEETAH

The St Louis ewer's depiction of fleeing gazelles pursued by a cheetah evokes the essential action of an organised hunt. Hunting with a cheetah was a particularly prestigious pastime that was a legacy of the Sasanian imperial tradition and preserved its cultural significance in the Umayyad, Abbasid and post-Abbasid periods.[14] The cheetah was traditionally trained to ride out to the hunting ground on the horse's croup (in order to conserve its energy) and, once released, was especially effective in sprinting to catch gazelles. In the hierarchy of trained hunting animals, the cheetah was held above the falcon in terms of the complexity involved in training, maintaining and deploying the animal, a painstaking enterprise that required highly specialised keepers only afforded by the privileged few. Nevertheless, these efforts were repaid amply at the hunt, and made the cheetah a prized possession at the court and among elite society. The deployment of cheetahs for chasing gazelles is recounted in some detail in the context of organised hunting parties described by the Syrian courtier and author Usama b. Munqidh (d.1188).[15] The deeply rooted cultural significance of the trained cheetah is also reflected in the frequent depictions of this feline, especially on ninth- to tenth-century ceramics from Iran, sometimes alone with simply an attached chain or riding on a horse's croup.[16]

As a frequent metaphor employed in connection with the figure of the beloved, the gazelle is one of the common faunal images in classical Arabic and Persian poetry.[17] Noted for its beautiful eyes and its nimble if flighty disposition, the gazelle as metaphor speaks not only to the physical appeal but also to the vulnerability and elusiveness of the beloved.[18] Turning on the literary duality of the figure of the beloved as both the object of the lover's pursuit and as the cruel tormenter of the lover, the image of the gazelle could function in a metaphorical capacity as both the hunted and the hunter.[19] This transpositional duality may also explain the poetic deployment of the image of the gazelle in correlation with the lover's predicament as a soul abandoned in the wilds of nature. Such is the case of the famous distich attributed to Abu Hafs Sughdi, a tenth-

century poet in the New Persian literary tradition: 'How does the mountain gazelle run in the desert? / He has no friend (*yar*). How does he go without a friend?'[20]

On the St Louis ewer, the poem's expression of the human pursuit of love finds its visual counterpart in the cheetah's pursuit of the gazelle so frequently associated with the figure of the beloved. This conceptual correlation is assisted by the perceptual correspondence between text and image, as the beginning of the poem and the 'start' of the chase scene (the cheetah) are both aligned with the ewer's handle. The animal chase moves from right to left, as does the inscription; the left-facing birds below the animal chase reinforce the same direction. This positional and directional correlation between text and image facilitates the complementary reading of these two elements which in turn promotes a conceptual association between the image of a cheetah chasing gazelles and the poem expressing the lover's awareness of the evolving nature of his love for the beloved that transcends its worldly aspect.

Furthermore, just as the hunt with the cheetah signified a courtly pursuit of age-old importance and literary resonance,[21] so too the love-themed poem evoked the courtly ideals most expressively articulated through the ethical signification of Persian love poetry.[22] In other words, although the image of the cheetah and the gazelles may indeed correspond to the idea of the two protagonists – lover and beloved – in the pursuit of love, a more extended understanding of their metaphorical functions invites reflection upon the courtly ethics both embedded into and engendered by the language of love. This ethical inflection of the connection between love poetry and a chase scene incorporating the cheetah and the gazelle is more explicitly formulated on a contemporary lustre-painted bowl in the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London.[23] On the interior of this bowl, a collared cheetah is depicted entering the scene from the right, seemingly ready to pounce upon an unsuspecting gazelle on the other side of a centrally placed cypress tree by a pond teeming with fish. The scene is surrounded by a Persian quatrain expressing the lover's suffering condition caused by separation from the beloved and the illusion of union in his mind: 'I talk of your tale every night with my heart / I seek your scent from every morning breeze / I wash my face with the blood of my heart for the purpose / That my face may not be yellow the next morning.'[24] Three lines of Persian verse are inscribed on the exterior of the bowl.[25] The condition of the glaze on the exterior prevents a full reading of these verses, but at least one deciphered line reads: 'As the world is not permanent for anyone / Surely it is best that goodness is left to be remembered.' Variations on this moralising verse are to be found in Firdawsi's *Shahnama*.[26] The remaining two lines have only been partially read, but convey a similar message about the transience of the world causing human suffering: 'Since the world is an inn, and we… / Perhaps you would not suffer a lot in it / You said that [in the world]… /… will pass in sorrow…'

The love poem and the chase scene on the interior of the Khalili Collection bowl are thus circumscribed and modulated by the ethical message of the verses on the exterior on the impermanence of the temporal world. As such, the image of a cheetah preying on a gazelle here is implicated in an edifying function that extends beyond the metaphor of the lover pursuing the beloved and focuses attention on the ultimate futility of all worldly desires, whether pursued in love or hunting. On yet a third example of a contemporary vessel with a scene of a cheetah chasing gazelles, the inscribed poem is entirely moralising in content (Fig. 24.2). The four-line Arabic poem on this lustre-painted cup dated 594 (1197–98) in the Harvey B. Plotnick Collection in Chicago extols knowledge as a fundamental human virtue and as the source of true honour and guidance:[27]

> All people are equal in their form, / their father is Adam and [their] mother Eve. // If there is honour for them in their origins / that they boast of, then [it is] clay and water. // There is no honour but that held by people of learning, because they / are the guides, for the one who looks for guidance // and the value of the man is his good deed / and the ignorant ones are enemies of those men of learning.

These four lines belong to a seven-line poem which is attributed to ʿAli ibn Abi Talib.[28] Recognition of this attribution would have likely heightened the viewer's receptivity to

FIG. 24.2 Cup, 594 (1197–98), fritware, Harvey B. Plotnick Collection.

the poem's moralising exhortation. Moreover, given that the great majority of poetic texts inscribed on late-twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century fine ceramics from Iran are in Persian, the choice of Arabic verses here suggests a bilingual audience with whom the message of the poem with its emphasis on learning as the source of honour and the means to deliverance may have had a particular resonance. It is also quite likely, though not absolutely necessary, that this audience was comprised of Shi'is; the ethical significance of the text–image composition, however, undoubtedly transcended any divisions of sectarian affiliation.

Beyond its attribution to 'Ali, the moralising function of the poem on the Plotnick Collection cup is akin to the message of the verses on the exterior of the Khalili Collection bowl, both drawing attention to the impermanence of worldly concerns. As such, both may be considered in the category of homiletic poetry. Developed especially in the Abbasid period as an expression of admonition often verging on the ascetic, homiletic poetry was cultivated in generic relationship to other forms such as the panegyric, the wine poem, or the love poem.[29] As Julie Scott Meisami succinctly articulated, the homiletic *qasida*, for example, 'presents a vision of the world antithetical to that of the courtly *qasida* by inverting or replacing the *qasida*'s formal and thematic conventions, thus negating or transforming them. Yet it remains closely tied to that world…'[30] That hunting imagery could serve the purposes of homiletic poetry is demonstrated in the opening of a *qasida* by the eleventh-century poet and philosopher Nasir-i Khusraw which begins with the line 'The eagle of this world is swift-winged, and men are its prey; what other business has the eagle of this world but hunting?' This opening via hunting imagery exposes 'the predatory nature of the material world which devours those who seek to consume it' and 'paves the way for the poet's renunciation of worldly affairs for spiritual.'[31] The image of a cheetah (analogous to the 'eagle of this world') chasing gazelles on the Plotnick Collection cup could thus evoke the court with its prerogative of 'worldly' pursuits, but this visual-literary image is inverted by the antithetical stance of the homiletic poem, which instead privileges the spiritual pursuit of knowledge within an extended aura of piety deriving from its attribution to 'Ali. In between the 'thesis' of the hunt scene and the 'antithesis' of the homiletic poem, however, is the 'synthesis' of love which, though actually absent from the text–image composition on the Plotnick Collection cup, can be construed figuratively through the metaphorical reading of the cheetah's pursuit of the gazelles.

THE POEM, ITS POET AND HIS POTTERY

Abu Zayd's juxtaposition of text and image on the St Louis ewer can thus be interpreted as a conscious co-ordination of imagery drawn from the semantically contiguous realms of love and hunting which, when read together, have the potential to lead the discerning viewer to construe the wider horizon of ethical signification. At the end of the quatrain on the ewer is a short Arabic phrase, *li-katibih*i ([This belongs] to its writer) which credits the writer with the composition of the poem. The following signature and date begin with *katabahu Abu Zayd*, meaning 'Abu Zayd wrote it', which discloses the identity of the 'writer' claiming authorship of the quatrain in the phrase *li-katibihi*. Abu Zayd had inscribed the same quatrain on one of his earliest known works, a *mina'i* bowl in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art dated Muharram 583 (March–April 1187).[32] Although the second half of the quatrain on the Los Angeles bowl is missing due to breakage, it is possible to note one small variation from the St Louis ewer inscription: instead of the word *mihr* (love) in the first line the Los Angeles inscription has the word *'ishq*. Since the meanings and metres of the two words are the same, this variation may be considered to be a minor one and, indeed, *'ishq* appears in the last line of the St Louis inscription in the same grammatical and metrical construction as *mihr* in the first line.

Once introduced by Abu Zayd towards the end of the twelfth century, this quatrain continued to be used in inscriptions on ceramics into the second half of the thirteenth century, appearing on lustre-painted bowls and tiles produced by unnamed later potters.[33] It was inscribed as late as the 1270s on the tiles of the Ilkhanid palace at Takht-i Sulayman.[34] Thus, after his death, Abu Zayd's quatrain became assimilated into the repertoire of hundreds of quatrains inscribed on vessels and tiles where, as in the overwhelming majority of cases of such quatrains, it remained unattributed (but not necessarily unattributable). The quatrain, as the shortest and most epigrammatic of Persian poems, was related most closely to the oral rather than the written context.[35] It was appreciated for its spontaneity of expression and composition, ideally recited *ex tempore* to lend meaning to a particular occasion or circumstance as it unfolded. Quatrains naturally 'floated' in oral culture and became subject to attribution and textual collection only intermittently. Misattributions abound in the genre, the most famous case being that of the improbably large number of quatrains attributed to 'Umar Khayyam in the centuries following his death. The anonymous endurance of Abu Zayd's quatrain in the realm of ceramics for several decades after the potter's death some time after 1220 may be considered to be in keeping with the nature of this genre and as a reflection of its place in thirteenth-century oral poetic culture at large.

The phrase *li-katibihi* on the St Louis ewer is an abbreviated version of Abu Zayd's distinctive formulations about authorship which especially characterised his earlier work.[36] The earliest known dated and signed work by Abu Zayd is a *mina'i* bowl in the Metropolitan Museum of Art dated 1186.[37] The signature and date on this bowl were written immediately following a poetic inscription on its exterior as follows:

> *qa'iluhu wa katibuhu Abu Zayd ba'da ma ['amila]hu*
> *kutiba fi yaw[m] al-arba'a arba' min muharram sana ithna thamanin khamsami'a hijriyya 'arabiyya baqa li-sahibihi wa li-katibihi*
>
> Its reciter and its writer is Abu Zayd after he [made] it.
> [This] was written on Wednesday the fourth of Muharram of the year five hundred and eighty-two of the Arab Hijra. Long life to its owner and to its writer.[38]

Here, Abu Zayd identified himself not only as the writer (*katib*) but also as the 'reciter' (*qa'il*) of the preceding verses, and provided a full date, which is quite unusual. The phrase 'after he made it' can only be understood to mean that Abu Zayd was the maker of the object. Although it may be argued that the lengthy date is a convenient space-filler in the inscription of the exterior, it seems likely that the dating was deliberately detailed in order to record precisely the authorship of the poem if not the whole work. His use of the term *qa'il* reflects the fundamentally oral nature of the quatrain as a poetic composition, while the term *katib* indicates the transference of this oral poetic composition to the object as a written text. By claiming for himself both the oral poem and its written manifestation as well as the making of the object, Abu Zayd effectively emphasised the innovative qualities of his work as a whole in this documentary approach to signing his work.

In Abu Zayd's later work, the dates became less detailed and his articulation of authorship was often limited to just *katabahu Abu Zayd* (Abu Zayd wrote it). This development towards the minimum suggests that Abu Zayd continued to regard poetic inscriptions as the distinguishing mark of his work but that he was no longer as concerned with asserting or detailing his personal role in the conceptualisation of such objects. It seems reasonable to deduce that his earlier work represents the output of a pioneering artist who quickly became a brand name in the fine-ceramic industry, known for his distinctive combination of literary and visual compositions. His continuing and explicit self-identification with the literary component of the objects he produced raises a number of questions. How was it that a ceramic artist in this period defined his work most closely with the art of poetry in both its oral and written aspects? Could it be that he identified himself initially (and primarily) as a poet (or, to be less specific, literary figure) and secondarily as a potter and painter? If so, how did a person with literary leanings in late-twelfth-century Iran become engaged in the fine-ceramic industry? Alternatively, if his poetic abilities developed alongside his skills in the trade, was he

an anomaly, or could his example be taken as evidence that a considerable degree of cultural sophistication characterised important figures in the fine-ceramic industry? The latter possibility certainly finds general support in the history of fine-ceramic industry of the medieval eastern Islamic world, most remarkably, for instance, in the case of Samanid epigraphic pottery from eastern Iran and Transoxiana that combined the art of calligraphy – often of the highest calibre – with Arabic adages. It also finds support in the very character of the quatrain as the least 'professional' and most pervasive of Persian poetic genres that dominates the repertoire of inscribed ceramics in Iran for about a century from the end of the twelfth century onwards. As the name behind a significant corpus of remarkable ceramic works, Abu Zayd obliges us to move beyond the conventional divisions of perception that force the alienation of material, pictorial and poetic cultures and to recover a sense of their joint role in the conceptualisation of such works as the St Louis ewer.

NOTES

1 Blair 2008: 155–76. The bowl is in the David Collection, Copenhagen; acc. no 45/2001. See also Blair and Bloom: 2006 no 118.

2 Acc. no 65:1954 (27cm by 12.8cm); the object is currently on display. According to the museum records, the ewer was purchased from the New York art dealer, K.[halil] Rabenou, on 16 March 1954, and its provenance is said to be the 'Bahrami Collection'. Though uncorroborated, this is likely a reference to Mehdi Bahrami (1905–51), the Iranian scholar and collector who published extensively on lustre-painted ceramics from Iran. If the ewer did indeed come from his collection, it is curious that he never published it. It may be that Bahrami acquired it not long before his untimely death in 1951 and that it was sold soon thereafter without the dealer's awareness of the potter's identity. I wish to thank Dr Lisa Çakmak of the Saint Louis Art Museum for her assistance and interest in this project, which resulted from a study visit to the Museum in October 2010. I am also grateful to Dr Alicia Walker, formerly of the University of Washington in St Louis and Dr Sidney Goldstein, former curator of Ancient and Islamic Art at the Saint Louis Art Museum, for their kind part in realising and facilitating my visit.

3 The most recent compilation of works signed by Abu Zayd and those attributed to him on the basis of style can be found in Blair 2008, but the following works should also be consulted: Watson 1985; Watson 1994: 170–80; Bahrami 1944–45: 35–40.

4 Recent work on the ewer by Laura Gorman, Objects Conservator at the Saint Louis Art Museum, has shown that the lower 3cm of the spout, the lower 1.5cm of the handle and about one-third of the rim are all original and that the neck had been reattached to the body just above the shoulder (personal communication, 20 January 2011). Otherwise, the ewer is in a reasonable state of preservation, with just one 3cm by 3cm area of loss from

the body, some weathering of the glaze on one side of the neck, and partial effacing of the lustre painting on the lower section of one side of the body. Only the original form of the whole spout, including the degree and placement of its bend, remains unclear, for which an idea may be gained from a comparison with similar ewers (see below, n. 6) although some of these also have restored spouts.

5 The only other closed form known to have been signed by Abu Zayd is a fragmentary lustre-painted vase (or bottle) dated 587 (1191–92). Its present whereabouts is unknown; see Watson 1985: Pl. 53.

6 These include ewers currently in the Louvre Museum (MAO 444), Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (POT1198 and POT773), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (50.3631), National Museum of Iran (4404), and Kuwait National Museum (LNS 185 C). A seventh ewer in monochrome glaze was published in Lane 1946–47: 25 and Fig. 12a and later in Lane 1956: Fig. 31.

7 Baer 1983: 90–91, 101–3.

8 Lane 1946–47: 19–30. On Chinese porcelain in the medieval Islamic world, see Kahle 1940–41: 27–46.

9 Acc. no C.112–1929; see Kerr 2004: 96 and Fig. 97.

10 The pristine quality of the opaque white glaze in this zone is partly compromised by a line of lustre stain possibly transferred from contact with another object in the kiln.

11 The poem also appears on later objects and tiles (see n. 33 below) and was published in Ghouchani 1992: 89–90.

12 Although dates are most often indicated with the Arabic preposition *fi* (in), the word inscribed here is the synonymous but far less common Persian preposition *dar*.

13 The depiction of this animal with a collar also precludes its identification as a leopard, as the latter, unlike the cheetah, was not normally human trained. On the difference between the two animals, see Viré, 'Namir and namr' (EI^2).

14 Viré, 'Fahd' (EI^2); Shapur Shahbazi 2004.

15 Smith 1981: 247–48.

16 See, for example, the tenth-century bowl from eastern Iran or Central Asia in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.68.22.10) which is painted with a sprightly and stylised cheetah with a chain: http://collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=28280;type=101. Representations of a cheetah riding on the back of a horse are encountered on Nishapur figural pottery (the so-called buff ware); for an example see Froom 2008: 48–49. A well-known, albeit highly restored and repainted, Fatimid lustre-painted bowl in the Benaki Museum, Athens, represents what is probably a trained cheetah in the company of its keeper: Philon 1980: 171, 221, cat. no 467.

17 Bürgel 1989: 1–11; Schimmel 1992: 193; Javadi 1984; Viré, 'Ghazal' (EI^2).

18 For a literary interpretation of the image of gazelles attacked by a lion at the Umayyad palace of Khirbat al-Mafjar, see Behrens-Abouseif 1997: 11–18.

19 Bürgel 1989: 4–6; Schimmel 1992: 401, n. 11.

20 Lazard 1970: 238–44.

21 On the hunting poem (*tardiyya*) in Arabic which includes references to cheetahs hunting gazelles, see Smith 1990: 167–84; Seidensticker, 'Tardiyya' (EI²). For an example of a hunting poem depicting a cheetah preying on two gazelles by the Abbasid poet Abu Nuwas, see Kennedy 2005: 114–15. The hunting poem as a genre gradually fell out of favour by the tenth century, although the subject of the hunt remained part of the poetic repertoire. For hunting imagery in Persian poetry, see Hanaway 1971: 21–34.

22 Love as the key subject of medieval Persian court poetry and its ethical signification is discussed most eloquently in Meisami 1987.

23 Acc. no POT1586; see Grube 1994: 241, cat. no 273.

24 The poem also appears on the tiles of Takht-i Sulayman and is published in Ghouchani 1371/1992: 49, where it is identified as a poem of the twelfth-century poet Anwari.

25 For the Persian originals of the verses, see Grube 1994: 335.

26 The same line is also inscribed on an early thirteenth-century lustre-painted jug in the Khalili Collection (acc. no POT164; Grube 1994: 242–43, no 276) which, interestingly, also features a register of gazelles in flight (whether or not these are pursued by a cheetah is not evident from the published image or description of the object). On this object, see further below, n. 38. For the same line inscribed on a lustre-painted tile from the Imamzada Ja'far (1266–67) in Damghan and the similar verses from the *Shahnama*, see Ghouchani 1992: 42, n. 48.

27 Pancaroğlu 2007: 121–23, cat. no 78. Note that my tentative identification of the chasing animal as a dog in this publication (123) was incorrect. Dogs were indeed used in hunting gazelles but these were normally saluki hounds, which are distinguished by their long and narrow heads and drop-ears, unlike those of the animal chasing the gazelles here. On the saluki hound's role in hunting, see Smith, 'Saluki' (EI²). For a nearly contemporary representation of what is probably a saluki hound, see Karev 2005: Figs 16–17.

28 For alerting me to this attribution, I would like to thank Abdullah Ghouchani (personal communication, 14 October 2009). Poetry attributed to 'Ali was compiled from the tenth century onwards by a number of scholars, culminating in the collection titled *Anwar al-'uqul min ash'ar wasi al-rasul* by Qutb al-Din Muhammad b. al-Husayn al-Bayhaqi al-Kaydari (d. after 574/1180–81), who based his compilation (completed before 564/1168–69) especially on works by earlier scholars of the twelfth century. On the formation of what is commonly called the *Diwan* of 'Ali, see the editor's introduction to the aforementioned title by al-Bayhaqi 1999: 22–25, 31–25. The four lines on the Plotnick Collection cup correspond to the first, second, fifth and sixth lines of the first poem in the *Anwar al-'uqul* collection, which predates the cup by about three decades. I would like to thank Dr Tahera Qutbuddin (University of Chicago) for the reference to the *Anwar al-'uqul* and for amending the translation of the verses given in Pancaroğlu 2007: 121. The same four lines were inscribed on a lustre-painted tile dated Safar 612 (June 1215) and signed by Abu Zayd in the Shrine of Imam Reza at Mashhad; Ghouchani 1992: 10.

29 Sperl 1989: 71–82; Kennedy, 'Zuhdiyya' (EI²).

30 Meisami 1996: 172–73.

31 Meisami 2003: 70.

32 Acc. no M.45.3.116; see Watson 1994: 89–90.

33 Examples include a bowl in the Kuwait National Museum (acc. no LNS 31 C; see Watson 2004: 359); a bowl in the Khalili Collection (acc. no POT826; see Grube 1994: 242, cat. no 275); a bowl in the National Museum of Iran (acc. no 4080; see Karimi and Kiani 1985: 230–31) and a star tile in the Plotnick Collection (see Pancaroğlu 2007: cat. no 92). The Khalili Collection bowl is decorated with a single gazelle in flight.

34 Ghouchani 1992: 89–90.

35 Elwell-Sutton 1975: 633–57; Davidson 2004: 133–47.

36 These are collected in Watson 1994.

37 Acc. no 64.178.1; see Watson 1994: 172 and Pls 161–62.

38 This last phrase is also inscribed on the lustre-painted jug in the Khalili Collection mentioned in n. 26 above. The jug does not appear to have the potter's signature, but this characteristic phrase and the representation of gazelles strengthens the possibility that it is also the work of Abu Zayd.

PART 8

PAINTING TRADITIONS AND CONTEMPORARY ART

25

FROM THE WORKSHOPS OF NEW JULFA TO THE COURT OF TSAR ALEKSEI MIKHAILOVICH: AN INITIAL LOOK AT ARMENIAN NETWORKS AND THE MOBILITY OF VISUAL CULTURE

AMY S. LANDAU

Dispersed across vast geographical areas, Armenian merchants, artists and religious scholars not only played a pivotal role in the circulation of goods and information; they also served as vehicles for visual culture. This article explores the mediation of 'Europeanised' artistic idioms through the Julfan Armenian mercantile network, one of the most expansive networks of the early-modern period.[1] For over a century, the central node of this trade diaspora was Julfa, located adjacent to the Safavid capital of Isfahan, south of the city across the Zayanda Rud. Shah 'Abbas I (r.1587–1629) established New Julfa to house affluent Armenian long-distance traders, whom he had forcibly deported from Julfa on the river Arax during his campaigns against the Ottomans at the start of the seventeenth century.[2] Historians have charted the prosperity of the Julfan merchants as exporters of Iran's silk, to Amsterdam in the west and Manila in the east, and have described the success met by these Armenian traders in integrating themselves into the socio-economic structures of Safavid Iran and beyond, especially where they benefited from close ties with other Christian communities, such as in Europe and Russia.

It is proposed here that the acceptance and development of *farangi-sazi* (lit. making European) in the arts of seventeenth-century Iran can be ascribed to a much larger extent than previously recognised to the role of Armenian merchants and artists as cultural mediators.[3] This article will argue for the Armenians' contribution to the spread of *farangi-sazi* by focusing on the career of the artist Astuacatur or Bogdan Saltanov (c.1630–1703), a member of the New Julfan merchant community who was active at the Romanov court in Moscow. His case supports the view that certain Persian and

Armenian painters from the Safavid empire not only interacted with, but were trained by, the same master painters. This leads to the conclusion that, in the second half of the seventeenth century, interest at the Safavid court in Europeanised modes was at least partly due to the mediating role of Armenian patrons and artists. Moreover, in the same period, New Julfan painters and craftsmen contributed to the spread of new idioms and technologies at the Romanov court in Moscow, as Astuacatur's example makes clear.

The scholarly tendency has been to focus on points of direct contact between the European artistic tradition, communicated via Western art and artists, and local communities of the later Islamic empires: the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals. This is a profitable approach in such instances as the royal invitation from Sultan Mehmet II (r.1444–46 and 1451–81) to Gentile Bellini (1429–1507), the medals he commissioned from Italian artists, or the reception of three Jesuit missions by the Mughal emperors Akbar (r.1556–1605) and Jahangir (r.1605–27).[4] The case of Safavid Iran, however, suggests a different frame of enquiry. The Safavid court did not seek specific foreign talent, as Mehmet II had done. With one known exception, the Europeans who received Safavid royal commissions were not well-known or 'named' artists (i.e. artists by profession).[5] Rather, they were merchants, travellers or missionaries who, having some talent with a brush, made themselves useful and profited by practising their art. Moreover, Western painters in Safavid Iran had limited representation among Muslim officials, unlike Jesuit painters at the Mughal court. Very few European artists moved in Persian court circles, even fewer were able to communicate in local languages.

In contrast, resident Armenian artists, some trained in the occidental tradition, did speak the vernacular languages and were well integrated into Safavid society. Being members of a global diasporic community, they were conversant with foreign cultural paradigms, which they interwove into their artistic language through a creative process of reception and adaptation and then transmitted to the host society. New Julfan merchants maintained ongoing relations with the Muslim elite. They also participated in Safavid systems of production and patronage that were not, as commonly thought, strictly confined within confessional boundaries.

The most fascinating episodes of exchange involve individuals capable of crossing boundaries: geographical, linguistic, religious and ethnic. An example is an Astuacatur who was also known by the names of Tanri veran (in Turkic), Bogdan and Ivan (in Russian). Sources indicate that he was born in Isfahan, and developed as a painter there and its suburb of New Julfa. Along with other Armenian painters, he is accredited with the decoration of one of New Julfa's most important architectural commissions, Surb Bet'łehem or Holy Bethlehem church. Built between the 1630s and 1650s, Holy Bethlehem heralded the Europeanised style in the religious wall-painting of the Armenian suburb.[6] By the late 1660s, Astuacatur was in Russia, where he worked under the name

Bogdan Saltanov (Bogdan, like Astuacatur, means God-given). His transfer from Iran to Russia took place at a moment when Armenian merchants had secured trading privileges with the Russian empire, under the umbrella of imperial relations between the Safavid and Romanov courts.[7] The initial agreement was for Astuacatur to stay in Moscow for a short time, to train young artists, and then to return to Isfahan. However, he remained and worked in Russia until his death around 1703. During that time he continued to receive goods from Isfahan and to represent the interests of his 'compatriots' at the Russian court. He also helped develop a school of painting characterised by the use of European painterly techniques such as modelling and *chiaroscuro* to give three-dimensional effects, very different from pre-existing Russian schools.

Astuacatur's career shines a light on how Armenian merchants and artists contributed to the processing of European visual idioms by non-European cultures, in ways that suited local artistic sensibilities, religious traditions and world-views. Armenian scholars such as Manya Łazaryan and Vazgen Oskanyan have written on Bogdan's Russian *oeuvre*, while Western academics, such as James Cracraft, and several Russian specialists have discussed Bogdan in the context of foreign painters at the Russian court.[8] In this article, evidence concerning this imperial painter is interpreted in the broader context of artistic mediation via mercantile communities that were at once local and global. The networks informing the development of Safavid art naturally involved various agents; moreover, these networks and agents were often limited to the orbit of the Persian court. My focus on interaction between the Safavid court and the merchant community of New Julfa is guided by the fact that exchanges between Armenian and Persian artists and patrons have been largely neglected in art-historical discussions.[9] This discussion represents an initial enquiry and the beginnings of a collaborative project.[10]

LOCAL NETWORKS AT ISFAHAN

An encounter between the Safavid ruler Shah Sulayman (r.1666–94) and a Christian merchant by the name of Połos, scion of one of the most affluent Armenian merchant families of New Julfa, the Vēlijaneans, provides a useful starting point for this discussion. This meeting reportedly took place during the late seventeenth century in the *maydan-i shah*, the great square of the capital city Isfahan. The meeting between Shah Sulayman and Połos is documented by the Armenian historian Tēr Yovhaneanc' in *Patmut'iwn Nor Jułayu* (*A History of New Julfa*), composed in nineteenth-century Isfahan on the basis of the archives of All Saviour's monastery.[11] According to Tēr Yovhaneanc', one day, while Shah Sulayman was passing through Isfahan's *maydan-i shah*, he came across Połos, with whom he had been on friendly terms when Połos was still a successful businessman.

Surprised at the abject state of the Christian merchant, who had gathered the rinds and seeds of melons and was selling them in the market place, Sulayman inquired about the sudden change of his circumstance. Połos responded in Persian verse, which is preserved in Armenian script by Tēr Yovhaneanc': 'If propitious fortune can move to the shadow of glory, it is possible for an ant to become Sulayman / If misfortune may lay hands on the amice,[12] then in this market place Połos may become a commoner.'

Moved by Połos's reply, Sulayman bestowed on him enough capital that he might restore his former status. After regaining his wealth, Połos repaid the shah two-fold. A caveat is necessary about this narrative, spiced as it is with certain topoi. Writing over a century and a half after the event is said to have taken place, the Armenian historian may very well have had an agenda for highlighting an economic arrangement that bolstered the royal treasury. Nevertheless, modern historians of late Safavid Iran have documented other symbiotic arrangements between Persian officials and Armenian merchants that lend credence to the passage.[13] Irrespective of the accuracy of Tēr Yovhaneanc's narrative, this account highlights social and economic ties between two figures known to have played pivotal roles as patrons of *farangi-sazi* – the European style – in Iran.

Połos was co-founder of the church of Holy Bethlehem, located in New Julfa's Great Square (Mec Mēydan).[14] His name, alongside that of his father, Petros Vēlijanean, is inscribed throughout the church.[15] Holy Bethlehem's murals provide the earliest extant evidence of a Europeanised style of painting employed in New Julfa's religious architecture. Consequently, we may assume that Połos and his family would have been recognised for the deliberate employment of a novel idiom in such a major architectural commission in the suburb's commercial centre.[16] On the other hand, Sulayman was an enthusiastic patron of *farangi-sazi* at court, especially in the arts of the book.[17] His imperial artists integrated European iconography and techniques such as *chiaroscuro*, atmospheric and linear perspective, and creatively fused them with long-established pictorial conventions associated with Persian painting. Sulayman was following a precedent set by his father Shah 'Abbas II (r.1642–66) who, in 1647, erected the Chihil Sutun palace in Isfahan's royal precinct, decorated with Europeanised wall paintings which represent an interweaving of Persian and European elements not found in earlier court patronage.[18] Thus, at the same time, in different zones of the capital city, *farangi-sazi* was heralded in two large-scale and public architectural commissions: Holy Bethlehem and the Chihil Sutun.

There are interesting and unexplored links between these two buildings that imply common threads in Persian Muslim and Armenian Christian patronage of *farangi-sazi*, and raise questions about the mediation of European artistic traditions in this context. The interiors of both the Chihil Sutun and Holy Bethlehem consist of an integrated scheme of gilded and painted stucco, tiled dadoes and wall paintings.[19] Although there are differences in scale, we find in both buildings large paintings in the Europeanised

style at an intermediate level with a lower row of smaller paintings just above the tiled dado; above these are arabesques and floral motifs painted in gold on blue and polychrome on red or white.[20] There are stylistic differences among the murals in both constructions that feature 'traditional' manuscript styles alongside westernised modes. At the core of the Chihil Sutun and the Bethlehem Church are paintings in a European mode: in the audience hall at the Chihil Sutun are four large rectangular murals of the Safavid shahs receiving regional representatives painted in the European mode;[21] while the congregation hall at Holy Bethlehem is filled with New Testament scenes. There are significant stylistic similarities between the buildings' Europeanised murals, including landscape and interior elements and figurative style (Figs 25.1 and 25.2).[22]

In reference to the murals at the Chihil Sutun, scholars have tended to highlight the contribution of Dutch artists, noting that the seventeenth-century traveller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier claimed that a Dutchman was responsible for some of the palace's murals.[23] Dutch artists may well have participated in the project – according to European sources of the first half of the century, Western painters were commissioned to decorate Safavid palaces – but we should not over-emphasise their role in large decorative campaigns. As mentioned, few European artists could move in court circles, and fewer were able to communicate in local languages. Most importantly, the Chihil Sutun murals are a hybrid of European and Persian elements. The role of Western painters may therefore have been minimal, and it is more likely that local painters trained in European painterly techniques were largely responsible. This hypothesis is supported by the strong similarities between the Chihil Sutun and Holy Bethlehem paintings, the latter painted by Armenian artists.

Along with a certain Minas, Astuacatur is credited with the decorative scheme of Holy Bethlehem. In the apsidal inscription, Minas – who is mentioned first – is associated with the paintings and Astuacatur with the ornamental decorations.[24] The careers of Minas and Astuacatur underscore the issue of the mediation of European artistic traditions via the New Julfan trade network. Minas transmitted aspects of the European tradition from Ottoman Aleppo, where a strong Armenian community was based.[25] According to the seventeenth-century Armenian historian Arak'el Dawrižec'i, Minas was trained in Aleppo by a European master portrait painter (*patkerahan vardapet*).[26] Further information about Minas's training in Aleppo is provided by Archbishop Artavazd Surmeyan, which highlights Minas's status as an intermediary between European painters and local Safavid artists:

> La peinture arménienne doit beaucoup à deux peintres italiens qui vers 1650, formèrent à Alep plusieurs élèves; parmi ces derniers, deux Arméniens de Djoulfa, en Perse, Varbèd Minas et Varbèd Agojan, après avoir terminé leurs études, retournèrent à Ispahan et furent nommé peintres de la cour du Shah Séfi. Ils décorèrent le palais du Shah et les demeures des riches arméniens d'Isphan, comme celle de khodja Sarfras.[27]

FIG. 25.1 Mural of 'Shah Tahmasp and Humayun' (Isfahan, Chihil Sutun Palace, c.1650). Photograph Sussan Babaie.

FIG. 25.2 Mural of 'The Adulteress' (New Julfa, Holy Bethlehem c.1630s–50s). Photograph H.A. Arakelian.

FIG. 25.3 Mural of the 'Ascension' (New Julfa, Holy Bethlehem, c.1630s–50s). Photograph H.A. Arakelian.

FIG. 25.4 'Ascension' (oil on canvas and silk), Church of the Crucifixion, Kremlin, Moscow 1680. Photograph Z.A. Gasparyan

Having completed his study, Minas returned to Isfahan, where his artistic skills were in high demand among Armenian merchants and Muslim court officials. Seventeenth-century *firman*s published by Levon Minasean corroborate Arak'el's narrative, attesting to the esteem in which the Armenian painter Minas was held by the Iranian elite.[28] One such decree, issued 'by the command of the noble navvab' (a high ranking individual wielding political power) refers to Minas as 'the painter of European paintings', and exempts the artist from paying taxes on his orchards.[29] Minas trained local painters in Safavid Iran, and thereby disseminated the European style: according to Dawrižec'i, 'several men became Minas's students and learned from him'.[30] Another decree, issued by Shah Verdi Khan, insisted that Minas turn his attention to the instruction of Master Riza.[31] It is therefore highly likely that Astuacatur was one of Minas's students: not only are they mentioned together in the apsidal inscription at Holy Bethlehem, with Minas's name preceding that of Astuacatur, but the paintings executed by Astuacatur in Russia, discussed below, are remarkably similar to those by Minas executed in New Julfa.

Returning to one of our protagonists of the *maydan-i shah* meeting, the question arises: did Shah Sulayman's imperial artists learn European painterly techniques alongside Armenian painters? In favour of this suggestion, I will focus on Astuacatur's work in relation to the work of Sulayman's court painters. This approach has never been taken before, largely because scholars have looked at the Armenian visual evidence separately from broader art-historical trends in Safavid Iran. Likewise, the Persian sources have been approached unilaterally. With the exception of Holy Bethlehem, evidence concerning Astuacatur's career in Iran is limited; however, significant information exists on his activities at the court of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, and this documentation from the Russian context sheds light on the situation in Safavid Iran before his transfer.

ASTUACATUR AT THE ROMANOV COURT

Astuacatur travelled along the networks of diplomacy and commerce between Safavid Iran and Romanov Russia.[32] New Julfa's merchants brought to Moscow silks, woollens and spices, for example. In the second half of the seventeenth century, with a view to securing advantageous trading privileges, Armenian merchants and the Safavid court used these channels to send luxury goods to the Romanov court. In 1660, Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich was presented with a throne dated 1659, decorated with diamonds, precious stones, silver and gold plaques, velvet and lacquer, produced under the supervision of the affluent Armenian Catholic Shāhrimanean family.[33] This presentation was conducted under the leadership of the merchant Zacharia Shāhrimanean (Zak'ar Šahrimanean),

son of Sarhad, who later served as a royal merchant for Shah Sulayman.[34] According to contemporary documentation, the gift also included an oil painting of the Last Supper. Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich requested that the author of the oil painting, along with other artists, including illuminators, silversmiths and goldsmiths, be sent to his court immediately. Zacharia promised to send experts.

The first known reference to Astuacatur by name occurs in a petition dated 10 March 1666, contained within commercial-diplomatic correspondence between Armenian merchants and the Tsar's court.[35] It mentions that the best painter in the workshop is T'anri Veran, the Turkic form of Astuacatur's name. By 1667 Astuacatur was in Russia, working under the name Bogdan Saltanov; after his conversion (see below) he was also known as Ivan Ievlevich Saltanov.[36] He received significant royal patronage, due to the initiative of the *boyar* (grandee and member of the old aristocracy) Bogdan Khitrovo (fl.1654–80), superintendent of the Kremlin Armoury. Under Khitrovo's directorship, the Armoury 'emerged as a virtual "academy of arts"'.[37] Khitrovo commissioned foreign painters to work in a novel mode and to train local artists.

Working in a school of painting characterised by the use of European techniques such as modelling and *chiaroscuro* to give three-dimensional effects quite different from the Russian tradition, Bogdan/Astuacatur was one among a select group of foreign painters at court. He specialised in portrait and icon-painting. Foreigners working at the court included the Dutchman Hans Dietersen (d.1655), the Pole Stanislav Loputskii (d.1669), the German or possibly Dutch Daniel Wuchters (fl. in Russia 1663–67) and Peter Engels (fl.1670s–80s).[38] The high salaries of these foreign painters indicate how greatly their skills were valued at the Russian court.

In 1674 Bogdan converted to Russian Orthodoxy, assuming the name Ivan Ievlevich Saltanov. Boyar Khitrovo acted as his godfather. In the petition sent to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich on that occasion, Bogdan wrote,

> On your order, great king I came to you, to Moscow, to execute all kinds of work in painting and I worked [for] eight years. Now, on your order, I stayed to serve you and to work for you forever. Loving the holy orthodox faith, leaving behind in my fatherland my father, mother and all my family, I was baptised in the orthodox faith, but for (this) baptism I have not been granted any help from you.[39]

On 24 November 1674, Bogdan was awarded the rank of nobleman in the Moscow register.[40] This is a remarkable development, probably directly ascribable to his conversion, since generally painters were associated with the middle classes. Over the next decade, Bogdan was awarded with 'grants of cash, fine cloth, handsome clothes, and most remarkably, lands with peasant holdings' – all 'for good skill and much work'.[41]

ASTUACATUR AND SULAYMAN'S IMPERIAL PAINTERS

Initiatives to integrate aspects of European art and combine them with traditional forms were supported simultaneously at the Safavid and Romanov courts. In Russia, Bogdan continued to paint in the Europeanised manner in which he had been trained in New Julfa. This can be seen by comparing the 'Ascension' executed in oil on silk cloth for the Church of the Crucifixion in the Kremlin in 1680 (Fig. 25.4), with the same scene at New Julfa's Holy Bethlehem (Fig. 25.3). The source for both compositions are the works of the Jesuit priest Jerome Nadal, *Evangelicae historiae imagines* (Antwerp, 1593) and *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia* (Antwerp, 1594). Interestingly, Bogdan may have played an indirect role in transmitting to Russia Jesuit iconography used in New Julfa. Although the cultural and religious implications of this cannot be addressed here, it seems to provide yet another instance of Armenian mediation.[42]

Between August 1672 and April 1673, Bogdan illustrated a book of Sibyls (Prophetesses) for Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich. The frontispiece of each chapter is an oil painting of a prophetess (Plate 25), whose heavy-lidded eyes, bowed-lips and elongated fingers compare closely with females depicted by Sulayman's imperial artists Muhammad Zaman (Plate 26) and 'Ali Quli Jabbehdar. We may also compare the facial features of St John the Theologian, executed in oil on silk cloth by Bogdan for the Church of the Crucifixion in the Kremlin in 1679, or his portrait of Fedor Alekseevich executed in 1685 in tempera on wood, with the Safavid fresco fragment *Attendants and Outdoor Feast*, formerly in the Art and History Trust, which Abolala Soudavar has attributed to Muhammad Zaman.[43] There is also an uncanny resemblance between Bogdan's posthumous portrait of the Tsar's son, Fedor, and the unsigned large-scale Safavid oil painting *Caucasian Royal Archer* (c.1650–90; oil on canvas).[44] These correspondences support the hypothesis that Armenian and Persian painters interacted and probably benefited from similar training. Moreover, they render plausible the suggestion that artists such as Minas, who studied at Aleppo under a European master and trained local Safavid painters, would have trained both Astuacatur and Sulayman's principal painters.

CONCLUSION

European artists were present in Iran in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, but there is scant evidence that the Safavid court was interested in formulating a new artistic mode until around the middle of the seventeenth century – exactly the same time that *farangi-sazi* was being actively commissioned by Armenian patrons and artists. One

may consider the possibility that the communication and reception of the European visual tradition was at least partly due to local channels sustained by economic and social relations in Iran: through local Armenian painters, such as Minas and Astuacatur, and patrons, like Połos Vēlijanean, and through truly impressive architectural works such as Holy Bethlehem. The activities of Astuacatur, who was trained in New Julfa and thrived as a royal painter at the court of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, bring to the fore the ways in which aspects of the European visual tradition were mediated along New Julfan trading channels. In Safavid Iran European painting was transferred via the painter Minas trained in Aleppo by a European artist. Astuacatur's artistic ability led to his being transferred to the Romanov court via diplomatic–trade channels defined to a large extent by the New Julfan merchants. In Russia, Astuacatur (i.e. Bogdan) helped initiate a novel school of painting characterised by the use of European techniques and iconography, such as Nadal's *Imagines*. Astuacatur was a product of an expansive merchant network; his training with Minas, his access to source material, and the opportunities he was offered are all results of that network. Traversing empires he was positioned to mediate (or rather, 're-mediate') the occidental tradition. This issue of mediation is key to understanding appropriation, hybridisation and syncretism that characterise artistic styles of sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas and Asia during the early-modern period. The most fascinating episodes of exchange involve individuals capable of crossing boundaries: geographical, linguistic, religious and ethnic, as the case of Astuacatur has shown.

NOTES

1 For this global trading network, see Xač'ikyan 1988; Herzig 1991, 1992; Baladouni and Makepeace 1998; Baghdiantz McCabe 1999; Bournoutian 2001; Baibourtian 2004; Chaudhury and Kévonian 2007; as well as the recent exceptional works Aslanian 2007, 2011.

2 For a study of (Old) Julfa's commercial network in the sixteenth century, see Herzig 1996; and for a thorough investigation of the deportations see Herzig 1990.

3 See Dihkhuda 1998, vol. XI: 17,106, where *farangi-sazi* is defined both as an individual who works in a European manner and as a work made in a European style.

4 For Sultan Mehmet II's patronage of European artists, see Raby 1980, 1982, 1987; see also Campbell and Chong 2005. For Jesuit missionary artists at the Mughal court, see Bailey 1998, 1999; Koch 2001; Weis 2004.

5 The major exception is Philips van Angel, who worked for the Safavid court between 1653 and 1655. Angel served as head of the St Lucas guild in Leiden and published a treatise entitled *Praise of Painting* (*Lof der Schilderkonst*, editio princeps 1642). For studies of this artist in Iran, see Floor 1979; Landau 2009, 2011.

6 Landau 2009, 2012.

7 For Russian–Safavid relations, see Xač'ikyan 1988, Bournoutian 2001, Matthee 2009, and bibliographies therein.

8 A monograph on Bogdan (Astuacatur) was published in Armenian by Manya Łazaryan and Vazgen Oskanyan: see Łazaryan 1986. This is the most systematic study of this painter to date. For art-historical studies of Bogdan within the context of Russian art, see, for example, Komaško 2003, Cracraft 2004, Boussieva-Davydova 2010, Bouchoueva 2010, Kornioukova 2010 and their bibliographies.

9 The works of Aslanian, Herzig, Xač'ikyan and Baghdiantz McCabe have drawn attention to the interrelationship between the Armenian merchants and the ruling Safavid elite, underscoring the utility of Armenian sources for Safavid studies broadly defined. I have followed their example in my approach to late Safavid art in Landau 2009 and 2012.

10 I am now working with Theo M. van Lint on a study of Bogdan Saltanov that explores the social, intellectual and artistic connections of this painter from New Julfa to the court of Aleksei Mikhailovich.

11 Tēr Yovhaneanc' 1880–81, vol. II: 129.

12 An 'amice', or *vakas* in Armenian, is an ecclesiastical vestment worn during the liturgy.

13 See Baghdiantz McCabe 1999 and Babayan 2004 for some recent studies of the subject.

14 Połos's name appears alongside his father's as co-founder of Holy Bethlehem; see an interior inscription documented by Tēr Yovhaneanc' 1880–81, vol. II: 173–74. The church was founded in 1077 of the Armenian era (1628–29). A nineteenth-century inscription over the west door states that the church took twenty years to complete. For a discussion of the dating of this church and the various dated inscriptions, see Tēr Yovhaneanc' 1880–81, vol. II: 173–79; Carswell 1968: 50–51; Hakhnazarian 1992: 44–51; Ghougassian 1998: 178–79; Landau 2012.

15 The numerous inscriptions naming members of the Vēlijanean family, Połos and Petros in particular, are transcribed in Tēr Yovhaneanc' 1880–81, vol. II: 173–79.

16 The Vēlijanean family was indeed invested in making the Great Maydan a centre for commerce and community. According to Tavernier (1930: 66), 'Cotgia Petrus était fort estimé parmi les Arméniens, tant pour les aumônes qu'il faisait que pour la grande église qu'il a fait bâtir, qui est une espèce de couvent où il y a un évêque avec des moines. La belle place où se tient le marché, toute environnée de boutiques, est encore un des ouvrages dont le public lui est redevable, et qui rendent sa mémoire célèbre parmi les Arméniens.'

17 Landau 2009: especially 76–168.

18 For systematic studies of this important palace see Babaie 1994b and 2008, as well as Blake 1999.

19 I am indebted to Julian Raby for first bringing these similarities to my attention.

20 The similarities between the Chihil Sutun and Holy Bethlehem may have gone even further. The major tympanum of the palace is now filled with Qajar paintings, but the complex relationship between the earlier seventeenth-century paintings only works if the tympanum was originally filled with decorative paintings, as in the case of the Bethlehem

Church. Again I wish to acknowledge Julian Raby for bringing this to my attention. This is supported by the fact that Chardin reported only four paintings in the audience hall, three reception scenes and a battle scene: Chardin 1811, vol. VII: 378, cited and discussed in Babaie 1994a: 181.

21 These have been defined by Sussan Babaie as 'Shah Isma'il and the Uzbeks'; 'Shah Tahmasp holding a reception for Humayun'; 'Shah 'Abbas I and Vali Muhammad Khan, the Uzbek ruler of Turkestan'; and 'Shah 'Abbas II and Nadir Muhammad Khan, ruler of Turkestan'. For an analysis of the subjects depicted, see Babaie 1994b and 2008.

22 For a full discussion of these similarities, see Landau 2009: 209–14. Here I shall limit myself to noting parallels in elements such as rolling green hills and streaked blue and pink skies, as in the Chihil Sutun's 'Shah Tahmasp holding a reception for Humayun' and Bethlehem's 'Adulteress', while the interiors in both are defined by brown architectural backgrounds with columns.

23 Tavernier 1678: 161.

24 There may be in fact a third painter who contributed to the decoration, as the inscription reads: 'The paintings were drawn by Minas Martiros. The floral decoration was drawn by Astuacatur'. The name can be interpreted as 'Minas Martiros' (i.e. one person), or 'Minas [and] Martiros'. For this inscription see, for example, Hakhnazarian 1992: 104; Ghougassian 1998: 183; Arakelian 1999: 82.

25 For the Armenian community in Ottoman Aleppo, see Surmeyan 1934 and Herzig 1991: 132–33.

26 On Minas, see Dawrižec'i 1990: 324–26. For a Persian translation of the relevant Armenian passage, see Minasean 1977; for accounts based on Arak'el Dawrižec'i, see Karim'zadah Tabrizi 1991, vol. III: 1355–57, and Ghougassian 1998: 182. The relevance of this passage in the context of Safavid interest in 'life-like' representation is discussed in Landau 2009: 201–9. For a recent English translation of this passage, see Bournoutian 2010: 320.

27 Surmeyan 1934: 35. I would like to express my appreciation to Dr Olivier Raveux for drawing my attention to this source.

28 Minasean 1982.

29 Minasean 1982: 191 (Document 4). Minasean has proposed 'the noble navvab' might refer to the vizier of Isfahan.

30 Dawrižec'i 1990: 326; Landau 2009: 208–9; Bournoutian 2010: 320.

31 Minasean 1982: 192–93 (Document 11). Shah Verdi Khan also charges Minas with abandoning the work for which he was commissioned, and taking on other commissions. Minasean suggested that this master Riza may be the famous Persian painter Riza 'Abbasi, who flourished during the first half of the seventeenth century. I have argued against this suggestion: see Landau 2009: 209, n. 559.

32 For a thorough account of the life and work of this artist, as well as a bibliography, see the Armenian monograph Łazaryan 1986. For more recent discussions of Bogdan's work see Landau 2009: 214–8 and Landau 2012; Boussieva-Davydova 2010: 573–74;

Bouchoueva 2010: cat. no 272; and Kornioukova 2010: cat. no 297. For matters of attribution, see Bouchoueva 2010: 620 and Komaško 2003. I wish to thank Edmund Herzig, who first brought this painter to my attention, as well as Theo van Lint, who has discussed Astuacatur with me on numerous occasions.

33 The Moscow Kremlin Armoury, inv. no R 30. The throne was, in Herzig's words, 'part of a gift exchange trade between the Safavi and Romanov courts': see Herzig 1991: 190. Herzig also notes that the Tsar had placed an order for luxury goods three years before. For recent discussions of the throne, see Loukonine 2003: 204–5, cat. no 232. See also Aslanian and Berberian 2009.

34 Aslanian and Berberian 2009.

35 Łazaryan 1986: 20. The document is published in Parsamjan 1953: 42 (Document 8), with a facsimile of the original. See also Bournoutian 2001: 12.

36 Łazaryan 1986: 20–21.

37 Hughes 2006: 647.

38 Boussieva-Davydova 2010: 573 mentions a Johann Dieters, portraitist and decorator, from Narva in Estonia, who takes service with Mikhail Alekseevich in 1643. This is no doubt the same person as Hans Dietersen mentioned above. She states that Loputski succeeded him in 1655, being active until 1659. See also Denisova 2010.

39 Łazaryan 1986: 22–23.

40 Łazaryan 1986: 23.

41 Łazaryan 1986: 23.

42 See Landau 2012.

43 Soudavar 1992, cat. no 152.

44 Collection of F. Farmanfarmaian: see Diba 1998: 130–33.

26

MODERN PALIMPSESTS: WHAT DEFINES A FAKE?

EMILIE SAVAGE-SMITH

Over the past two decades a number of leaves of Arabic, Turkish or Persian manuscripts – all illustrated with paintings on medical or scientific topics – have begun to circulate among the general public and to enter the collections of museums and libraries.[1] The most distinctive feature of all of these items is the placement of a miniature painting on top of a completely unrelated text – hence the somewhat jocular description of them as 'modern palimpsests', for they reuse pages of earlier genuine manuscripts. The underlying text is not erased or rubbed out, as one would expect with a true palimpsest, but rather covered over with a thick, opaque paint that serves as a ground for the miniature painting. The painted 'ground' allows us to divide the known examples into three groups, which I have somewhat frivolously classified as follows: products of the 'master of the blue ground' (Group One); products of the 'master of the yellow-cream ground' (Group Two); products of the 'master of the orange-beige ground' (Group Three). Within each of those three basic categories, the products can be classified in terms of subject matter, labelling and the placement of supposed owners' stamps.

All of these images appear to be modern (twentieth or even twenty-first century) interpretations of earlier medical or scientific drawings, some of European origin and some of Persian or Turkish origin. Where there is labelling, it is pseudo-writing, written by someone who apparently could not read Arabic or Persian or Ottoman Turkish. When the provenance is known, they seem to have been purchased in Istanbul.

GROUP ONE

The products of the 'master of the blue ground' are the most striking, but are represented by the smallest number of known examples. The 'tooth with toothworms' (Plate 27) is a fine example of this artisan's work.[2]

The underlying text is an unidentified Arabic commentary on *al-Qasidah al-Munfarijah*, or *al-Faraj ba'd al-shiddah*, by Abu al-Fadl Yusuf ibn Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn al-Nahwi al-Tawzari (d.513/1119).[3] The appearance of the paper, ink and script of the underlying text suggests that the folio was taken from a copy made in the eighteenth or possibly early nineteenth century.

The over-painted illustration appears to be quite recently executed (late twentieth century). An area 11.2 by 12.7cm was over-painted with a thick white opaque paint (visible through the back side); a gilt frame was drawn around the painting, with two outside fillets of black ink. Over this ground coat, a tooth was drawn in black ink and filled with white and pink opaque watercolour; the interior of the tooth is decorated with ink drawings of devils and serpents, highlighted with a tan watercolour wash. The ground surrounding the tooth is painted with a flat navy blue and sprinkled with gilt.

The notion of a toothworm had a history in Arabic medical and magical writings. For example, in the *Kitab al-Rahmah fi al-tibb wa-al-hikmah* by al-Sanawbari (d.815/1412) it is said that toothache is of two types, one caused by excessive cold and the other due to a worm (*dudah*) moving about in the interior of the tooth.[4] Yet the notion of a toothworm was more a part of folklore than of medical therapeutics. The idea of a toothworm causing toothache is found in many older societies, as is also the charlatan's trick of slipping a worm into a patient's mouth and then extracting it to cure the toothache.[5] The design of the tooth in this particular painting, and the depiction of the devils and serpents within, is strikingly similar to those displayed on a European poster that was for sale via the internet in 2007 for $24.95, titled 'The Tooth-worm and Other Tortures of Hell'.[6]

A virtually identical over-painting (but with two teeth instead of one) on a leaf from a different Arabic manuscript is now in the collection of Eliza Glaze in South Carolina. Neither of the two 'toothworm' paintings have labels or writing on them, nor owners' stamps.

A third example of this workshop (Fig. 26.1) takes up a non-medical topic: astrolabes.[7] The underlying Turkish text is unidentified, but it has been over-painted with an identical gilt-sprinkled ground on which an astrolabe has been placed in the lower left corner, with seven circles of varying sizes arranged above and alongside. These circles are filled with numerals and with nonsense pseudo-writing – that is, though the

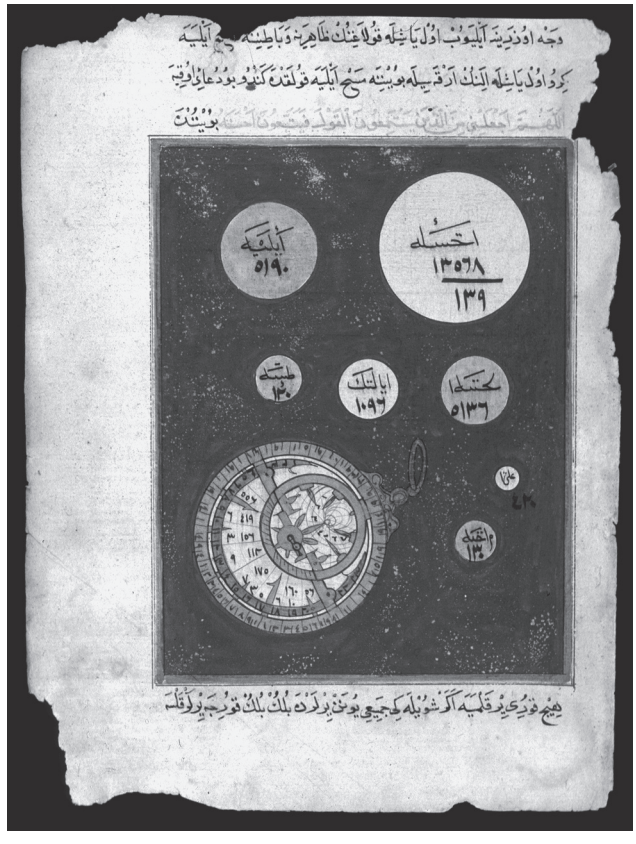

FIG. 26.1 Cambridge, Whipple Museum of the History of Science, inv. no 5358.9, twelfth/eighteenth century, with painting added fourteenth/twentieth century?). Reproduced with permission of the Whipple Museum, Cambridge.

script appears carefully formed, it represents neither Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Malay nor any other known language. The composition is surrounded by a gilt frame with blue and red fillets. There are no owners' stamps nor other efforts to impose a provenance.

GROUP TWO

The first example of the 'master of the yellow-cream ground' (Fig. 26.2) depicts two eye diagrams loosely based on some early-modern European drawings.[8] In this instance, the yellow-cream ground has been painted over an Arabic text on geomancy (*'ilm al-raml*), probably transcribed in the nineteenth century. The line of text visible at the bottom, beneath the painting, continues on the back of the page; at the bottom of the verso there is a catchword giving the first word of a following folio, which is now missing. What appear to be the beginnings of Arabic words in the left-hand marginal text are later extensions of strokes onto the cream ground in an attempt to make it appear that the marginalia originally extended into the painting.

FIG. 26.2 Charleston, SC, Collection of Eliza Glaze, Turkish MS. 1, frag. c (thirteenth/nineteenth century, with painting added fourteenth/twentieth century?). Reproduced with permission of Florence Eliza Glaze.

The lower diagram showing a cross-section of the eye with its various tunics is possibly a colourful interpretation of diagrams associated with copies of the *Opus maius* of Roger Bacon (d.1294), some of which have been reproduced in general books on medieval science.[9] The numerals placed directly on top of the lower eye diagram are also meaningless. The sequences of meaningless numerals, often with lines drawn under them, are more extensive than in Group One.

The hallmark of this second workshop, however, is the greater flourish and confidence with which the nonsense-writing has been executed. Note the distinctive *S*-curve to the tail of the *mim*. This workshop also employs undated owners' stamps on their products to provide an aura of validity. In this instance, there is a large circular stamp in the upper-right-hand corner and, near the bottom, a now-faint impression of a square stamp bearing the name of one al-Ra's 'Abd al-Muhibb.

On another leaf from the same Arabic manuscript on geomancy, there is a squatting figure of a woman showing internal organs, painted by the same workshop (Fig. 26.3).[10] The squatting figure is clearly based upon figures associated with copies of the *Tashrih-i Mansuri* or *Mansur's Anatomy*, composed in Persian in 788/1386 by Mansur ibn Ilyas.[11] The treatise contained five chapters on the 'systems' of the body: bones, nerves, veins,

FIG. 26.3 Charleston, SC, Collection of Eliza Glaze, Turkish MS. 1, frag. d (thirteenth/nineteenth century, with painting added fourteenth/twentieth century?). Reproduced with permission of Florence Eliza Glaze.

arteries and muscles, each illustrated by a full-page drawing, with an additional drawing illustrating a woman with gravid uterus. The latter was the inspiration for this modern interpretation, which omits the foetus but keeps the circular uterus while adding details to the genitalia. The verso of the folio contains the end of the treatise, with the title *al-Raml al-jami'* (*The Comprehensive Geomancy*) given in the colophon. The painting on this folio also shows the same 'owners' stamps' as the painting with the two eyes, with an additional third stamp (a circular stamp with the name Yahya Malik).

Also attributable to this same workshop are two paintings of skeletons, both of which have the stamp for Yahya Malik and the distinctive style of nonsense-writing. One of the skeletons is based upon a skeleton found in early copies of the *Tashrih-i Mansuri*, in which the skeleton is drawn as if viewed from behind, with the head hyper-extended, so that the mouth is at the top of the page, and the cranial sutures indicated by jagged lines marking out a triangle.[12] The second skeleton[13] is clearly derivative from one found in the anatomical treatise by Shams al-Din al-'Itaqi, whose Turkish treatise, *Tashrih-i abdan wa-tarjuman-i qabala-yi faylasufan*, was dedicated to Murad IV in 1033/1623.[14] This particular skeleton from al-'Itaqi's treatise has been published in several printed volumes in recent years, so that direct access to a

manuscript copy of Shams al-Din al-'Itaqi would not be a necessity for a would-be imitator.[15]

The employment of illustrations derived from Andreas Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica*, printed in Basel in 1543, can be seen in a third skeletal design in which only the skull is depicted, in two different views.[16] One of the views shows the skull with dissected throat, and both are reminiscent of the engravings illustrating the *Tabulae sceleti et musculorum corporis humani* of Bernhard Siegfried Albinus published in 1747, though equally the model might have been the plates of Charles Estienne (d.1564) or William Cheselden (d.1752).[17] This painting of two skulls can also be assigned to Group Two, on the basis of the calligraphy of the pseudo-labels, and the same three owners' stamps (one large and ornate placed at the join of the conjugate leaves, one of Yahya Malik, and one of al-Ra's 'Abd al-Muhibb). The owner's stamp of Yahya Malik, as well as the calligraphy distinctive to this group, can also be seen in a painting (over an unidentified Arabic manuscript) in which a patient is having a tooth extracted by a physician sitting on his left, with an attendant to the right holding the patient's head.[18]

The same three anatomical models (a squatting male figure showing internal organs from the Persian *Tashrih-i Mansuri*, the skeleton from Shams al-Din al-'Itaqi's Turkish treatise, and the skull with dissected throat derivative from Vesalian anatomy) can be seen on another pair of conjugate leaves acquired in 2007 by the Museum Dr Guislain in Ghent, Belgium.[19] It may not, however, be directly attributable to the workshop of the 'master of the yellow-cream ground', for the pseudo-writing is in a different calligraphic style, and the ground is light-grey with a thick gilt border. Moreover, it does not display the same delight in bright colours, for the figures are all drawn in black ink and ink washes, with just a few highlights in maroon ink.

Very likely within the *oeuvre* of the workshop designated 'the master of the yellow-cream ground', however, are a number of group scenes on non-medical topics. Fig. 26.4 is an example of one such painting, in this instance showing two groups of men being instructed in the use of quadrants, astrolabes, a sextant(?), a geometer's right-triangle, and a straight-edge (or observation tube).[20] The composition is reminiscent of illustrations in thirteenth-century copies of the *Maqamat* by al-Hariri (d.1122),[21] and no doubt one such published image served as the model for this modern palimpsest. It was painted over a manuscript copy of an unidentified collection of Turkish poetry. The yellow-cream ground has been framed by two red fillets (as was Fig. 26.3), though in this instance the frame has been extended below to include one line of poetry from the underlying text. The nonsense-writing is in the same calligraphic style as other examples of Group Two, although not as boldly flourished. The painting, however, lacks the meaningless numerals or the owners' stamps associated with other examples of the workshop.

In the case of another example from this workshop, an exact identification of the model is possible. A different leaf from the same volume of Turkish poetry used in the production of Fig. 26.4 was employed as a base for a modern interpretation of a famous, and often reproduced, Ottoman miniature showing astronomers at work in the 'small' observatory built in Istanbul in 1577. The original miniature illustrated the *Shahanshahnama* (*Book of the King of Kings*), a verse chronicle completed in 989/1581 of the reign of sultan Murad III, who was responsible for building the observatory.[22] In the 'modern palimpsest' acquired by the Whipple Museum of the History of Science, University of Cambridge, the scene has been simplified, with the number of people reduced from 16 to 11 and the number of instruments reduced from 24 to 16.[23] The basic composition is, however, immediately recognisable, though the artist has placed four lines of the distinctive nonsense-writing at the top, where in the original there were books representing a library and several couplets of verse. The artist also did not attempt to maintain the colour scheme evident in the original miniature, suggesting the possibility that the 'model' used by the artist was a black and white version, for the original has been most often reproduced in monochrome rather than in full colour. The modern palimpsest version appears to have been

FIG. 26.4 Cambridge, Whipple Museum of the History of Science, inv. 5358.6 (thirteenth/nineteenth century, with painting added fourteenth/twentieth century?). Reproduced with permission of the Whipple Museum, Cambridge.

painted on a leaf from the same manuscript as used in Fig. 26.4 and it also lacks any numerals or owner's stamp.

Another example with similar pseudo-calligraphy and lacking owners' stamps is a painting showing a turbaned physician restraining with his foot a patient stretched on a low table while he extracts a tooth.[24] The patient's turban has fallen onto the floor, and a trumpeter in the background is blowing his horn. In this instance, the delineation of the figures is skilfully executed, and the ground is a mottled dark gilt – features differentiating it from others assigned to this group.

On the basis of the distinctive calligraphic style of the nonsense-writing, another 'modern palimpsest', acquired in 2001 by the Wellcome Medical Library in London, might also be attributed to Group Two, although the ground is a light-green opaque watercolour framed in two red fillets.[25] The published images show two folios, one showing the internal organs of a bearded male in a composition analogous to the structure of a house that is in turn depicted on the right-hand leaf. There are no owners' stamps.

GROUP THREE

In products of the third group, the 'master of the orange-beige ground', the pseudo-writing is less well-formed, at times deteriorating into unembellished hooks and ticks, and there is less use of meaningless numerals. The paintings are usually framed by three fillets (black, blue and red), and the ground is usually a dark beige with a decidedly orange tinge. The first example (Fig. 26.5), however, has a creamier ground.[26]

Over an unidentified Turkish text (two lines of which are still visible above and below), a thick, opaque ground has been painted, framed in a black fillet, with a larger frame of three fillets drawn to include the two lines of original text. The painting was placed on the verso side of the folio, a catchword being evident in the lower-left corner. A schematic rendering of the inner ear, in bright reds and oranges, has been painted in opaque watercolours. Nonsense-writing in two styles has been added above and below the ear, one in a small, unadorned script in red ink and the other, in black ink, in a more ornate style. Both scripts, in terms of the slant and style of ornamentation, can be differentiated from that used in Group Two. In the lower right of the painted panel there is a small sequence of meaningless numerals – a characteristic shared with Groups One and Two. There is no owner's stamp.

A mirror-image of this vividly coloured rendering of the inner ear is found in a volume containing ten other 'modern palimpsests', all on medical topics even though the underlying manuscript on which they are painted is totally unrelated to medicine. The

manuscript,[27] which is now in the Bodleian Library, is a copy made in 1134/1722 of an introduction to the study of the Arabic sentence (*al-I'rab 'an qawa'id al-i'rab*) by the Cairene grammarian Jamal al-Din ibn Hisham (d.761/1360).[28]

All 11 illustrations are executed on an orange-beige opaque ground that has been painted over a text area of approximately 16.0 by 10.3cm and framed in thin lines of black, blue and red ink. All the illustrations are annotated with pseudo-writing, either of the smaller, unembellished type that in Fig. 26.5 is written in red ink (but in this manuscript is written in black ink), or of a larger, more elaborate form. The larger script in the Bodleian manuscript is more ornate than that shown in Fig. 26.5, but is still easily differentiated from that employed in Group Two. There are no *S*-shaped *mim*s, while groups of three dots alternating with hooks or ticks are placed *below* the line of writing, and curved lines extend over the tops of groups of letters. Red and green inks dominate. All the illustrations also have an owner's stamp with the name Hasan al-M.[?] and the date 1078, equivalent to 1667. The latter is of course an impossible date of ownership for a manuscript copied in 1722.

FIG. 26.5 Oxford, collection of the author (twelfth/eighteenth century, with painting added fourteenth/twentieth century?).

The 11 'modern palimpsests' in this manuscript are:

1. a skeleton with the cranial sutures on an upturned head (folio 15b);
2. a skeleton with the head drawn frontally (folio 16a);
3. a squatting male figure showing both veins and arteries (folio 25b);
4. a squatting female figure showing both veins and arteries (folio 26a);
5. a squatting female figure with gravid uterus (folio 37a);
6. two views of the heart (folio 44a);
7. the brain and the thorax (folio 51a);
8. the eye and the skull/brain (folio 60a);
9. the inner ear (folio 69b);
10. a woman giving birth, assisted by a midwife (folio 77b);
11. a male being operated on by a physician lying beneath the patient, illustrating either circumcision or surgery for a urinary calculus (folio 86b).

Both skeletons are derivative from copies of the *Tashrih-i Mansuri* by Ibn Ilyas. In the first skeleton, the artist misunderstood the original model and placed eyes on the painting so that it appears to look forward even though the cranial sutures are depicted, while in the second version the artist omitted the cranial sutures and drew a full face looking at the reader. The three squatting figures are also related to the figures depicting the arterial and venous systems and the gravid uterus found in copies of *Tashrih-i Mansuri* (see Fig. 26.3 for a similar figure produced by the workshop of the 'master of the yellow-cream ground'). The paintings of the individual organs, including the inner ear, are interpretations of diagrams in early-modern European anatomical publications. The scene of a woman giving birth, assisted by a midwife, is reminiscent of a Qajar illustration now in Kansas City,[29] while the painting of a male being operated on by a physician lying beneath the patient is suggestive of illustrations accompanying the Turkish surgical treatise composed in 870/1465 by Sharaf al-Din Sabunji-oghlu.[30]

Virtually identical versions of the eye and the skull/brain paintings on folio 60a of the Bodleian manuscript are found in a second example of Group Three illustrated in Plate 28, where they are at the lower centre and lower right. There they are combined with a brightly coloured cross-section of the eye (upper right) and an 'eye in human head' diagram (left). This leaf from a volume of Turkish poetry has had the two columns of verse on one side completely over-painted with an orange-beige ground; a catchword from the original text is still visible at the upper left (lower left in original orientation of text).[31] As with all known products of this third workshop, there is (in the lower right corner) the circular owner's stamp bearing the name 'Hasan al-M…' and the date 1078 (1667).

The 'eye in human head' is clearly based on a figure in the Latin treatise *Liber de oculis* by an otherwise unknown Macharias, preserved in a unique manuscript in the British

Library.[32] The Macharias diagram has been published in several places,[33] and collections published in Europe of medieval scientific images must therefore have formed one of the design books for the artists of these palimpsests.[34]

It is also evident that at least two of these workshops shared the same design books. The cross-section of an eye (Plate 28, upper right) reflects the same model as that used by the artisan of the 'master of the yellow-cream ground' illustrated above in Fig. 26.2, but even more vividly coloured. Both are colourful interpretations of an eye diagram associated with copies of the *Opus maius* of Roger Bacon. Moreover, a 'toothworm' painting with a blue ground (typical of Group One), but with the telltale calligraphy and owner's stamp (of Yahya Malik) of Group Two, was recently offered for sale at the Palais Dorotheum in Vienna.[35]

Thus it seems that the paintings are all recent interpretations of earlier Latin, Persian or Turkish models – all having been published in general books on the history of medieval medicine, science or art history during the past fifty years. The *Album of Science* by John Murdoch, for example, has reproductions of three of the diagram models discussed here (the miniature showing the Islamic astronomers at work, the cross-section diagram of the eye, and the Macharias eye diagram),[36] and their being published in monochrome leaves the colour choice to the imagination of the modern artist.

The playful use of numbers and the employment of nonsense pseudo-Arabic suggests that the artists making these paintings could not themselves read or write Arabic, Persian or Ottoman Turkish. Their use of leaves from genuine manuscripts on unrelated topics confirms their ignorance of these languages.

Are the products of these workshops to be classified as fakes? Are they to be classed as semi-fakes? The manuscript leaves on which they are painted are all genuine – mostly eighteenth- or nineteenth-century copies. The paintings are, however, modern interpretations of medieval and early-modern miniatures. The placement of owners' stamps on the paintings, and the extension of strokes from original marginal annotations onto the ground of the painting suggest a purposeful desire to mislead the buyer.

No matter how we might classify these products, nor how charming the paintings may be, it is undeniable that their production involves the misuse and partial destruction of genuine manuscripts and the intentional defrauding of an uninformed buyer.

NOTES

1 I wish to thank Dr Liba Taub, Curator of the Whipple Museum of the History of Science, University of Cambridge, and Dr Florence Eliza Glaze of Charleston, South Carolina, for generously providing copies of paintings in their collections.

2 Bodleian Library, MS. Arab. d.256, folio 1a. Dimensions 21.2 by 14.1cm. For a detailed description, see Savage-Smith 2011, vol. I: 794–96, entry 242. The folio was purchased in 2005 in Istanbul at Ottoman Miniatures (Haluk Ertezcanlı, Zekeriya Güngör Asal), Sahaflar Çarşısı 18 Beyazit-Istanbul, by Eliza Glaze, who gave it to the author, who in turn donated it in 2009 to the Bodleian Library.

3 For al-Tawzari, see Brockelmann 1898–1902, vol. I: 268–69 (2nd ed. 1943–49, vol. I: 316–17).

4 See al-Suyuti 1938: 74 bab 51, and for the true author of this treatise (al-Sanawbari), see Savage-Smith 2011: 734–38, entry no 217.

5 For the history of the toothworm and its use by charlatans, see al-Hamdani and Wenzel 1966: 60–64; Gerabek 1999: 1–6; Meyerhof 1945: 203–4; Pormann 2005: 189–227.

6 Available at http://www.barewells.com (accessed 11 March 2012); poster based on a small (10.5cm in height) ivory carving of a molar tooth which opens to reveal toothworms, attributed to 1700s France.

7 Cambridge, Whipple Museum of the History of Science, inv. no 5358.9. Dimensions 26.8 by 20.2cm (blue ground 18.6 by 14.4cm); acquired in Istanbul in 1998.

8 Collection of Eliza Glaze, Charleston, SC, Turk. MS. 1, frag. c. Dimensions 20.0 by 15cm (yellow ground 15.1 by 11cm); the folio was purchased in Istanbul.

9 See Murdoch 1984: 237, no 214 (from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Digby 77, folio 7r); see also 239, no 216 for similar Latin eye diagrams.

10 Charleston, SC, Collection of Eliza Glaze, Turk. MS. 1, frag. d. Dimensions 20.2 by 14.9cm (yellow ground 14 by 11.4cm); purchased in Istanbul in early 2000s.

11 For the treatise by Ibn Ilyas and its illustrations, see Russell 1983, vol. VIII: 16–20; Savage-Smith 2007: 147–59 and Figs 1–6.

12 Charleston, SC, Collection of Eliza Glaze, Turk. MS. 1 frag. a. Dimensions 21.4 by 15.5cm (yellow ground 16.5 by 9.8 cm); acquired in Istanbul in early 2000s. The Turkish text underlying the painting is unidentified. Strokes of some letters in the margins have been extended into the painting. For a reproduction, see Gilman and Glaze 2005: 1209 (left figure).

13 Charleston, SC, Collection of Eliza Glaze, Turk. MS. 1 frag. b. Dimensions 21.5 by 15.1cm; yellow ground 14.4 by 11cm); acquired in Istanbul in early 2000s. The underlying text, on European watermarked paper, is an unidentified Turkish text citing Pir 'Ali Birgili, possibly Mehmed b. Pir 'Ali Birgivi (d. 980/1573), author of a popular book of Islamic catechism (*Risale-i Birgivi*).

14 See Kahya 1990: Pl. 15.

15 For example, Lentz and Lowry 1989: 149, Fig. 49.

16 Charleston, SC, Collection of Eliza Glaze, Turk. MS. 1 frag. e. Dimensions 19.5 by 29.8cm; the pair of conjugate leaves has two paintings each on a ground measuring 14.6 by 11cm. The leaves were apparently extracted from the same Arabic geomantic manuscript on which the illustration in Fig. 26.2 was painted.

17 For a discussion of some of Albinus's plates, as well as other anatomical illustrators in the Vesalian tradition whose illustrations underwent numerous printings and circulated widely (including in Ottoman Turkey), see Roberts and Tomlinson 1992.

18 Hammersmith, London, private collection. Dimensions 21.5 by 13.6cm (painted ground 11.5 by 12.5cm); acquired on eBay around 2007/8 along with a surgical illustration also painted over a manuscript leaf and overstamped with the same stamp for Yahya Malik; both reproduced at http://www.phisick.com/islamic-art-fakes.htm.

19 Ghent, Museum Dr Guislain (J. Guislainstraat 43, 9000 Ghent, Belgium). The bi-folio appears to have been extracted from an Arabic treatise concerned with Hadith, copied on a brown and foxed paper. Dimensions and provenance are unknown.

20 Cambridge, Whipple Museum of the History of Science, inv. no 5358.6. Dimensions 29.8 by 21.1cm (cream ground 24.3 by 15.5cm); acquired in Istanbul in 1998.

21 See Grabar 1984.

22 Istanbul, Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi (MS. F. 1404, folio 57a); for a reproduction and discussion, see Savage-Smith 1992: 12–70, esp. 27–28 and Fig. 2.10.

23 Cambridge, Whipple Museum of the History of Science, inv. 5358.4. Dimensions 28.3 by 20.2cm (opaque ground 21 by 14.9cm); acquired in Istanbul in 1998.

24 Hammersmith, London, private collection. Dimensions 20.5 by 13.6cm (painted ground 13.4 by 9.7cm); acquired on eBay around 2007/8; see http://www.phisick.com/islamic-art-fakes.htm.

25 Dimensions and provenance unknown. For an illustration, see the *Wellcome Library Annual Review* 2003: 7.

26 Oxford, collection of the author. Dimensions: 20.5 by 15.5cm (painted ground 13.2 by 11.5 cm). The undated manuscript folio is probably eighteenth century; the slightly foxed paper is water-damaged along inside (left) edge and damp-stained around the three outside edges. Purchased in Istanbul in early 2000s by Dr Eliza Glaze, who later gave it to the author.

27 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Arab. e.246, consisting of 100 folios, of which 11 have over-paintings. Dimensions 21.3 by 15.2cm (painted areas c.16.0 by 10.3cm). The volume was purchased in 2005 in Istanbul at Ottoman Miniatures (see n. 2 above) by Katherine de Kruif Walsh, who gave it as a birthday present to Eliza Glaze, who in turn donated it in July 2006 to the Bodleian Library. For a detailed description of this manuscript, see Savage-Smith 2011: 791–94, entry 241 and Pl. 44.

28 For this influential grammarian, see Fleisch, 'Ibn Hisham' (EI^2), and Brockelmann 1898–1902, vol. II: 24 (2nd ed. 1943–49, vol. II: 29).

29 Kansas City, University of Kansas Medical Center, Clendening Library, Persian medical illustration, folio 6b. The image was published in Abbri and Mazzolini 1993: 212.

30 For illustrations, see Huard and Grmek 1960.

31 Now in the Khalili Research Centre, Oxford. Dimensions: 29.7 by 20.4cm (painted ground 24.8 by 17.4cm). The undated manuscript probably dates from the nineteenth century, and the European paper is now slightly foxed, with the area under the two columns of poetry on the back side streaked with dark grey through reaction with the thick ground painted on the top side. The volume was purchased c.2000 in Istanbul by Eliza Glaze, who gave it to the author, who in turn presented it to the Khalili Research Centre, Oxford.

32 London, British Library, Sloane MS. 981, folio 68r, late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.

33 For example, Murdoch 1984: 238, no 215, and Jones 1984: 50, Fig. 17.

34 An early-modern Western model is also evident in another 'modern palimpsest' on a pair of conjugate leaves (28 by 41cm) extracted from an unidentified Turkish manuscript. In this case it is based on the two hemispheres comprising a planispheric celestial map by Melchior Tavernier printed in Paris about 1650 (for an illustration of the Tavernier map, see Savage-Smith 1992: 67). The calligraphy on the modern painting differs from other examples cited here, and the owner's stamp, dated 1331/1912, does not occur on other known examples. It is in the collection of Dirk A. de Pagter of Telluride, Colorado, who acquired it at the California Book Fair in San Francisco in the early 1980s.

35 Vienna, Palais Dorotheum, sale catalogue 'Antique Scientific Instruments and Globes', 30 May 2011, lot no 298.

36 Murdoch 1984: 172, no 155; 237, no 214; 238, no 215 respectively.

27

'NEO-CALLIGRAPHISM' AND ITS DIFFERENT VARIETIES IN MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY IRANIAN ART

HAMID KESHMIRSHEKAN

This article aims to examine and define the two main neo-calligraphic tendencies in modern and contemporary Iranian painting since the 1960s. Given the fact that there have been similarities and parallels with movements at the time in other Islamic countries – albeit in different contexts and socio-political background – nevertheless, no attempt is made to present parallels with the art of those countries, expressly to avoid a positivist generalisation of the subject.

Iranian artists began embracing modernism from the early 1940s onwards. Various artists responded to the question of modernity *vis-à-vis* their cultural heritage in different ways. The 1960s were one of the most significant eras in modern Iranian art, and were influential in the formation of a modernist approach to the traditional heritage going under the definition of neo-traditionalism. During this period, Iranian art was witness to a movement, the *Saqqa-khaneh* school.[1] Whereas the *Saqqa-khaneh* artists had differently chosen to communicate through the modern language of art in its various forms, its pioneers attempted to find common ground between modern Western art, especially its abstractions, and religious folk art.

Neo-calligraphy in Iran thus originated in the *Saqqa-khaneh* movement, however, soon evolved into two main tendencies:[2] one comprising the *Saqqa-khaneh* artists who exploited calligraphic forms as a primary pictorial material and the other, *Naqqashi-khatt* (mixture of words, painting and script), consisting of professional calligraphers who found an interest in employing calligraphy in creative ways in their works.

These two types of neo-calligraphism developed distinct forms of expression, the *Saqqa-khaneh* artists and their followers going in the direction of 'letterism',[3] the work

of *Naqqashi-khatt*[4] artists similarly being characterised by different forms. I use the Farsi term *Naqqashi-khatt*[5] both for the works as well as the neo-calligraphic movement for want of an adequate English term to convey the meaning. However, to distinguish between the tendency and the works, I use the words 'movement', 'tendency' or 'trend' after the term when it refers to the movement. There is a brief introduction to some distinguished figures of the two groups, including three members of the *Saqqa-khaneh* and a post-revolutionary letterist artist in whose works the calligraphic approach has been dominant, and also a number of *Naqqashi-khatt* artists. Meanwhile, one can find some artists outside these two tendencies whose paintings demonstrate an affinity with calligraphy. Among others, the works of Mansureh Hosseini (b.1936) and Gholamhossein Nami (b.1936) can be mentioned.

Since this article discusses a genre in Iranian art which is still alive, it might be sensible to consider it in two periods, before and after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. However, owing to the thematic nature of the subject (which is focused on interpretation of the movement), the chronological approach is not particularly appropriate. Hence despite consideration of the time and space and differences in terms of content in the works of artists, this interpretation deals mainly with the various forms of this tendency and their characteristics from its beginnings in the 1960s until the 2000s. Nevertheless, the parallels between artistic and other movements will also be mentioned when necessary.

First, in order to comprehend the concept of neo-calligraphy and its differences from various sorts of traditional calligraphy, a brief definition of the nature of classical calligraphy may be helpful. In classical calligraphy any special script shows distinct characteristics in terms of style and even content,[6] which unifies the work of different calligraphers. As Schimmel notes, 'the *Kataba* for a calligrapher could be restricted to certain kinds of writing (e.g. decorative pages, *hilyas*, or books), but it could also be valid for every kind of calligraphy in the special style that the newly graduated calligrapher would write.'[7]

Traditional calligraphy is governed by strict regulations and principles, and the mastery of a traditional calligrapher is indicated by excellence of technique in accordance with these principles. In this way, a calligrapher is not expected to change the traditional procedures and order of calligraphy. In fact, to the traditional calligrapher respect for the laws of his trade is just as important as respect for the religious principles on which the rules are based. Therefore he is more interested in elaborating the art of calligraphy than fundamentally changing it; in softening its edges rather than carving new angles.

A survey of the history of Islamic art shows that calligraphy has long been used in various shapes, colours and compositions for decoration and the formation of compositional shapes. According to Welch (1979):

> Architectural inscriptions, like those on objects, were more often observed and admired than read. While their content was specific and often directed at a special and identifiable historical situation, to the mass of believers they served a symbolic function, asserting the power and rectitude of Islam simply by their presence. […] To one who lived within the testimony of Islam, its religious and cultural belonging, and while the script had content and did serve to decorate and enliven the surfaces of buildings, this affirmation was its vital social function.[8]

A practice sheet of Siyah-mashq, which is when the letters are written without any special meaning, is a typical traditional calligraphic mode in which the meaning is secondary to the pictorial representation of the calligraphy. It usually consists of a superimposition of lines and words without regard to continuity or meaning: the antithesis of the literary aspect of classical calligraphy. Content is unimportant here because the forms themselves testify to the intrinsic value of the works.

Neo-calligraphism, however, is a modern approach to calligraphy which emerged, as mentioned, first in the works of neo-traditionalist *Saqqa-khaneh* artists in the early 1960s and then developed according to various innovative approaches.[9] Indeed, as Parviz Tanavoli, the pioneering artist of the *Saqqa-khaneh* movement, points out, it must be born in mind that 'from the mid-1960s onwards, the *Saqqa-khaneh* movement was on the rise, with increasing numbers of painters joining its ranks or, if you like, jumping on its bandwagon. Most of them used calligraphy as the basis of their work and often simply covered their paintings with script.'[10] One of the most common and significant trends followed by *Saqqa-khaneh* was the *Naqqashi-khatt* movement in which the employment of calligraphic motifs as the dominant element of their works was the most important feature. So it was not surprising that the school's popularity and fame as a *formal* and acknowledged artistic movement throughout the country might have caused some to suggest that *Naqqashi-khatt* had been a part of the *Saqqa-khaneh* school, or even that its artists were members of the school.[11] However, although this tendency was initially inspired by the *Saqqa-khaneh* movement, it later established different characteristics. Therefore, despite the undeniable and effective influence of *Saqqa-khaneh* on the formation of *Naqqashi-khatt*, a careful consideration confirms that the artists of *Naqqashi-khatt* gradually formed their own artistic strategy.

There is no doubt that it was in the wake of pioneers such as Charles Hossein Zenderoudi (b.1937), Parviz Tanavoli (b.1937) and Faramarz Pilaram (1937–82), who began to use traditional calligraphy as a primary reference of their works in a modernistic approach that other artists – including Mohammad Ehsai (b.1939), Reza Mafi (1943–82) and Nasrollah Afjai (b.1933), as major representatives of *Naqqashi-khatt* – started to practise this way. Considering that the main purpose of the *Saqqa-khaneh* school was an attempt to find a stylistic synthesis of the artists' historical past

and contemporary artistic approaches, the fundamental similarity between these two is understandable. However, some distinct differences can be found in their approach to calligraphy. The *Saqqa-khaneh* artists and their followers benefited from various aspects of Iran's pictorial tradition, including calligraphy, for their inspiration. In *Naqqashi-khatt* it was calligraphy which had been principally emphasised and used as a pictorial source from tradition; however, now the artist underlined the sacred or literary aspects of the calligraphy and generally traditional content too. Therefore, it can be said that the work of the letterists tends to be more secular-orientated, but artists of *Naqqashi-khatt* have been more interested in including sacred or literary subject matters in their works.[12]

Saqqa-khaneh artists originally started to use calligraphy as abstract raw material to characterise their paintings (and sculpture, in the case of Parviz Tanavoli) in the same way that they utilised other various local and traditional pictorial sources. These letterists used traditional calligraphy as the primary element of a dynamic abstraction freed by their individual creativeness. The most important preoccupation of this group, akin to that of recent artists of post-revolutionary Iran, was to create innovative paintings which show familiarity with contemporary international art styles[13] while maintaining their own collective pictorial heritage. Hence their orientation *vis-à-vis* the question of cultural identity and use of tradition was basically a pictorial reference mostly in a secular orientation. It was then logical that among other representational forms of the Iranian pictorial tradition calligraphy and its formalism were used as a primary material to help the artist to achieve his ideal. As a result, in the pictorial construction of their canvases there is no sign of such characteristics of traditional art as the commitment to including a religious or literary content or a specific subject matter in a readable text.[14] For them, the basic shapes of the simple letters of such calligraphic forms as *nasta'liq*, *shikasteh*, *thuluth*, Kufic, *muhaqqaq*, singly or in combination as structural elements of composition, was dominant, but observance and respect for the conventional rules of calligraphy, a very significant point for traditional calligraphers, could not be found in their abstract works. Using just the calligraphic forms and different sorts of script as a source for inspiration, the majority of the letterist artists, then, never intended to learn or consider the rules.

With a survey of the cultural atmosphere of Iranian artistic gatherings, and also some written pieces in art publications and exhibitions, during the 1950s, and especially the 1960s – such as introductions to the Tehran Biennials[15] and Talar-i Iran's[16] publications – it becomes clear that they focused on two main topics, i.e. contemporary artistic practices in accordance with international art movements on one side and the formation of national and Iranian art on the other.[17] What is emphasised, here (prevalent in those years) is the importance of the issue of current idioms and awareness of what was happening on the artistic scene, which mostly referred to Euro-American art. On

the other hand, the issue of 'national' and 'Iranian' identity was also emphasised and promoted by cultural custodians, and a motivation of artists individually. It has been argued that this kind of policy by the government facilitated the artist's attention to Western artistic phenomena and paved the way for the formation of a 'decorative' art.[18]

Art organisers and administrators of the state (in Mohammad Reza Shah's reign, 1941–79) were in favour of a kind of 'official art' whose function was formally to represent Iranian identity on the one hand and show familiarity with modern art tendencies of the time on the other. Indeed the modernist nature of the state – in which the modern characteristic of an artistic work and its familiarity with contemporary (Euro-American) art was more important than the traditional quality – meant that the main criterion for acceptance of a work of art by the state was that it should carry a nationalist sentiment in a modern mode. However, this policy resulted in the establishment and development of such neo-traditional artistic trends as neo-calligraphy, which included both above-mentioned characteristics.

Before this propagation of art, in the 1960s, the issue of identity in art, as in other fields of intellectual and social life, was discussed in artistic and intellectual gatherings. During the 1940s and 1950s, the terms 'national art' or 'school of national art' were repeatedly mentioned by both modernist artists and cultural administrators, and some attempts were even made by artists to achieve this kind of art. Here, the relationship between some intellectual and governmental debates respecting the problem of national identity could have been an effective agent in influencing the artistic atmosphere of that era. In other words, since modern art was adopted by Iranian artists in the 1940s, although modernism and its acceptance by artists and Iranian society was the main issue, many of those pioneers tried to look at modern Western art from an Iranian point of view. However, it was in the 1960s that Iranian avant-garde artists were able to achieve a modern–traditional synthesis through the creation of various forms of neo-traditional works, among which neo-calligraphism emerged.

In the period before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, one can observe that at the same time as the state principally supported modern art,[19] such traditional arts as miniature painting, traditional calligraphy, traditional music, because of their distinguished Iranian characteristics and their relation to Iranian cultural heritage, were also promoted by the Ministry of Culture and Art. From the 1930s to the 1970s several centres and organisations came into existence, including traditional art workshops, the Bihzad Art High School (*Hunaristan-i Bihzad*), where miniature painting was at first the dominant subject of the school, and the Society of Iranian Calligraphers (*Anjuman-i khushnivisan-i Iran*).[20] It is not surprising that the *nasta'liq* script – as the pure Iranian style of calligraphy – became a symbol of Iranian calligraphy and was dominant in the Society of Iranian Calligraphers in terms of the number of its instructors and students.

Among other effective functions of the state's cultural policy in the formation of artistic trends during the sixties and seventies, the promotion of nationalism by the state as a major strategy could also be obviously identified. The role of the Persian language as a sign of identity by the government was another point which should be borne in mind. On the other hand, the importance of the Persian language for some Iranian intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s also coincided with government policy in regard to this issue. From their viewpoint, 'language is vital in the sense that it forms the most important non-material link among members of a community. Language, after all, is the medium in which cultural symbols are created and articulated, and it contains the elements of a concept of the world and of a culture.'[21] The Persian language for them was also the quintessential sign of identity and collective memory for the Iranian nation.

It is clear that among the founding members of *Saqqa-khaneh*, Charles Hossein Zenderoudi, trained firstly in the Tehran Faculty of Decorative Arts (*Hunarkadeh-i hunar-hay-i taz'ini*) and then in Paris, must be considered the pioneer of the calligraphic approach, in so far as he used calligraphy as the sole compositional element.[22] A prolific letterist, Zenderoudi branched out into calligraphy after his initial experiences in using local religious folk art. It was perhaps Zenderoudi who motivated and influenced other members of the *Saqqa-khaneh* school to use calligraphy as a source for their neo-traditionalist works. In Zenderoudi's canvases, unlike many others within this trend, calligraphy has lost its decorative function and literary-religious content, and has become an element used for the creation of abstract and rhythmic spaces. It also sometimes shows similarities with those of the Dadaist approach (Plate 29).[23] Influenced by the mid-twentieth-century modernist's motto, Zenderoudi believed in the absolute freedom of an artist, enabling him to make a complete commitment to his art without any external pressure imposed on him.[24] This attitude which is a part of the radical manifesto propounded by abstract art (especially in the French Art Informel[25] of the 1950s) can be clearly found during all his various artistic phases. In Zenderoudi's pseudo-scripts, the characters in themselves basically carried no meaning, but were meaningful as organic elements of visual art and alive with cultural connotations. He neglected all the rules of calligraphy and concentrated his efforts on exploring the visual nature of the graphic elements. At the junction of calligraphy, and geometry, we find the compositions of letters and the purity of calligraphic elements (in some cases rather resembling Op-art) in which Zenderoudi intellectually refines the graphic geometry of the script. Nevertheless, he is heir to a great and magnificent graphic tradition in which the various arts of the book, such as calligraphy, painting and illumination, each contributed to the others' beauty and meaning. Also one should consider Zenderoudi's attention to some traditional styles of calligraphy, specifically Siyah-mashq and a basic connection between his works and traditional pre-modern works. However, he seems

to have developed the talismanic and calligraphic trends of contemporary tradition into a personalised pseudo-script of signs.

Parviz Tanavoli emerged as a passionate believer in a modernism attained through forms of popular visual culture, and cited this folk expression as his inspiration. Reworking tropes from classical Persian literature, Islamic folk art and calligraphy, he produced works that provocatively fuse style and meaning. Apart from his earlier use of unreadable letters or pseudo-script patterns in his abstract sculptures, Tanavoli began to make his *Hich* (Farsi for nothing) sculptures in the early 1970s. Although the theme first appears to reflect the feelings of frustration and meaninglessness which haunt modern man, the works in fact transformed the existentialist cry of nothingness into a Persian allegory. To use his own words, 'my nothingness […] was not tinged with the cynicism of Western artists. Mine was the nothingness of hope and friendship, a nothingness that did not seek to negate.'[26] These sculptures often have a fanciful, questioning look, and though sometimes shown inside a cage, they seem at home there, not ensnared or locked away. They are sometimes escaping the cage, poised in joyous and lyrical flight. In other words, the *Hich* suggests a mystical condition beyond nothingness.

Another distinguished work in which Tanavoli has focused on calligraphic patterns appeared in the *Walls of Iran* series, produced in the mid-1970s and 1980s. Inspired by his own previous works and modelled after ancient Mesopotamian and Persian reliefs, this monumental series of bronze sculptures consists of the articulation of intricate inscriptions and pictograms. The richly structured walls ornamented with scripts echo the elaborate calligraphic pattern of Islamic architecture but at the same time other pictographic sources too (Fig. 27.1).

A letterist and member of the *Saqqa-khaneh* school, Faramarz Pilaram is another pioneer of neo-calligraphism. Among other *Saqqa-khaneh* artists, Pilaram – a graduate of the Tehran Faculty of Decorative Arts – is best known for his familiarity with classical calligraphic styles, although he avoided representing any specific style in his works. He produced many inscription-like canvases. Pilaram, whose use of old seals featured in the first part of his artistic career, first used these in his works as a connective texture in geometrical compositions. In this period, a close similarity can be observed between his works and Zenderoudi's initial *Saqqa-khaneh* painting.[27] However, he later examined various styles in which calligraphy, especially calligraphic forms inspired by *nasta'liq*, played the main role.[28] In his canvases, calligraphy not only assumes a traditional status, but also imparts the spontaneity of its interpretation of the lines, their perpetual change, the juxtaposition of colours, the entanglement of knots and circles and spirals and straight lines, and the amalgamation of various volumes.

What is most commonly found in Pilaram's neo-calligraphic paintings is the use of the *nasta'liq*-like and occasionally *shikasteh*-like forms that associate the whole composition

FIG. 27.1 Parviz Tanavoli, *Poet and the Cypress Tree*, 2006–7, bronze, gilt patina, 91cm high. Private collection.

with Siyah-mashq in which one can distinguish a few dominant meaningless forms of words or letters such as *Sala* and *La*. During the late 1960s and the early 1970s, he created several expressionist calligraphic paintings and colourful free-hand *shikasteh*-like canvases, resembling on the one hand the 'action painting' in terms of forms, while reminding the viewer of traditional inscriptions on the other. In some paintings, which are kept in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Pilaram experimented with musical calligraphic compositions. In these paintings, rhythmical words play visual movements in a symphonic space. In fact, the homogeneous quality of indigenous arts, music, poetry and decorative painting consciously merges with harmonic symmetries in his canvases (Fig. 27.2). Pilaram continued his letterist style later in 1975 with links to *Guruh-i azad-i naqqashan va piykareh-sazan* (the Independent Group of Painters and Sculptors), and as one of its founders.[29] In 1976–77, he was making some huge bronze sculptures while continuing to build on his previous experiences in letterism. Pilaram, who had used words as spontaneous elements based on traditional calligraphic forms, arrived at a reduction of calligraphic structure to the rhythm of the decorative shapes.

Another *Saqqa-khaneh* artist who has used calligraphy as a main element in some of his canvases is Sadeq Tabrizi (b.1939). A creative painter and ceramicist, Tabrizi graduated from the Tehran Faculty of Decorative Arts in 1967. He has used the ornamental patterns and figures of the late Safavid period, texts, stamps etc. in his satirical compositions. He also used calligraphic elements with their essential forms, mainly the *shikasteh* script, in his paintings, which featured in his exhibitions during 1970–71.[30] In these neo-calligraphic works, Tabrizi avoids conveying any kind of readable message, emphasising instead the dance-like quality of the calligraphic forms. The contrast between black lines and forms on the ochre background, full and empty spaces which remind one of Chinese calligraphy, creates an expressionistic space in his paintings. Having produced rhythmical and lyrical compositions using calligraphic elements, in particular during the 1970s and 1990s, he has continued with this style in recent years.

Although the works of Mansureh Hosseini (b.1936) cannot exactly be classified as letterism or *Naqqashi-khatt*, her usage of calligraphic patterns in her paintings is characterised by its diverse styles. Here we should mention that quite separate from the *Saqqa-khaneh* school and its artists Hosseini – a graduate of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Tehran University and Rome Academia di Belle Arti – had attempted to use forms of calligraphy in her paintings from about 1959 (the *Saqqa-khaneh* was introduced in

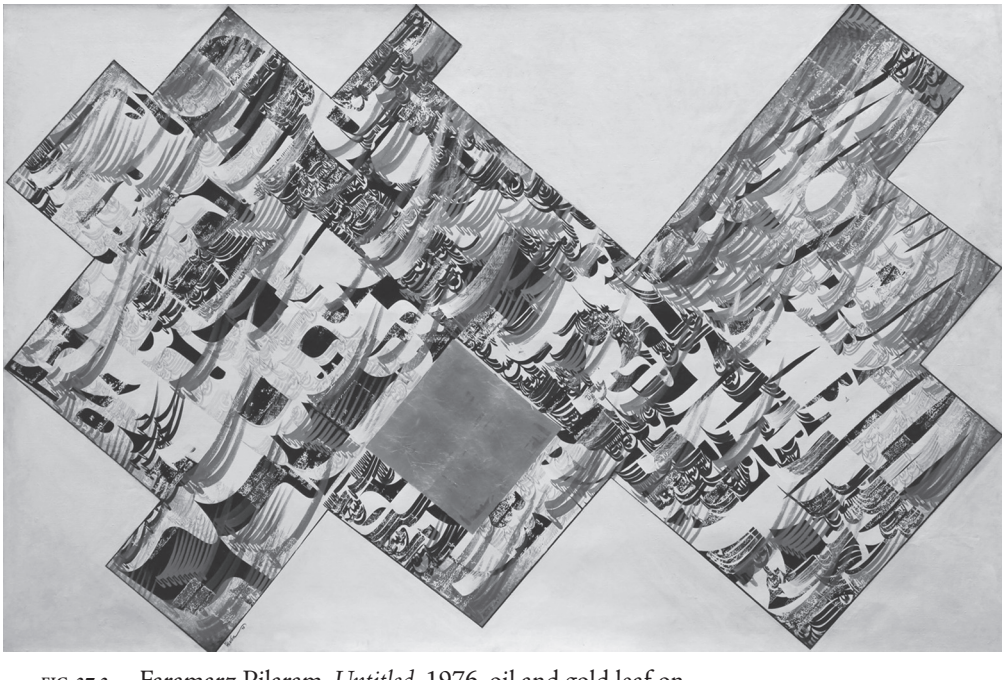

FIG. 27.2 Faramarz Pilaram, *Untitled*, 1976, oil and gold leaf on canvas, 130 by 198.5cm. Private collection.

1962). Indeed, according to Hosseini, she was not aware of the school or of one of its main characteristics, the use of calligraphy. Her style developed while she was studying and working in Italy. As Ruyin Pakbaz, a prominent Iranian art critic, maintains, 'the different large quantities of paint soon led her to an Abstract Expressionistic and subjective rendering of emotional experience, from the objective expression of situation and moods, which she had practiced until then.'[31] Since that time she has been inspired by different types of Arabic and Persian calligraphy, including Kufic, *nasta'liq* and *shikasteh*, with colourful forms and an expressionist style in her canvases. Her brush strokes in massive coloured, unreadable abstract paintings cannot be related to any specific style of calligraphy, but her dynamic word-like forms can be associated with her source of inspiration, which is traditional calligraphy.

As mentioned earlier, while the *Saqqa-khaneh* movement's popularity was at its peak, more artists started to practise calligraphic idioms. A modernist artist who was mainly famous for his three-dimensional mixed-media abstract works inspired by old Iranian gravestones, Gholamhossein Nami (b.1936) created works using patterns from calligraphy in his series of works in the 1970s. Highlighting the rhythm and motion in two-dimensional canvases, he was more concerned about the formal characteristics of letters and scripts than any specific literary meaning of those patterns. The spontaneous moves of these patterns on his canvases just reincarnate familiar signs and calligraphic forms.

Unlike the artists mentioned above, the artists of *Naqqashi-khatt* mainly included professional calligraphers who initially used calligraphy as a pictorial source from tradition. However, now these artists considered the traditional content as a crucial component of this art. As a result, the dominant characteristic of their images has been their dependence on the conventional rules of calligraphic form, its anatomical principles, as well as the existence of meaning. Having religious, literary or narrative concepts, their works mostly represent readable and meaningful words, religious or poetic verses. In *Naqqashi-khatt*, although the formal frameworks are respected, the individual creativity of an artist has not been invalidated in his work. This creativity is able to present a vast variety of artistic perception. This significant element has no particular importance in traditional calligraphy, which is dominated by definite conventions.

Mohammad Ehsai (b.1939) is a major member of the *Naqqashi-khatt* tendency, and one of its pioneers in the late 1960s. A professional calligrapher, Ehsai believes his neo-calligraphic style, in which the pure usage of calligraphy, its anatomy and atmosphere exist, is quite different from that of the *Saqqa-khaneh*, in which calligraphy is used in painting simply as a material.[32] Using the pure structure of traditional calligraphic forms in his canvases, an artist with firm religious beliefs, he has achieved an aesthetic synthesis between traditional calligraphy and modern graphics of letters. In the works

of Ehsai, the ability to modify the form of script has been employed so that he can create his innovative visual compositions. In some of these paintings, created over many years (1968–2000s), there is no sign of intensity of colour and the artist has tried to create three-dimensional forms with scripts and monochromatic scales. The stiletto-like forms of *thuluth* and *muhaqqaq* scripts have been arranged in a systematic order that forms the basis of the structure of paintings.

In terms of subject matter, Ehsai is mostly inspired by classical Persian poetry and also contents based on Qur'anic verses and Hadith, especially in his works created in the period after the Islamic Revolution. For him, just as for his calligrapher ancestors, the content and meaningful aspect of writing is very significant, but he does not try to make the meanings of his *Naqqashi-khatt* clear by using clearly distinguished words or verses. In fact, he lets his feelings, which are based on religious beliefs, participate freely in the creation of a religious atmosphere (Plate 30). According to him, in his works he uses the forms of letters and the narratives, which are symbolised by the composition of letters in Iranian culture, as a means of expression. In his poetic representations, black and white are two separate parts of a narration, leading the viewers to a conceptual, pure and magic world of the letter. He believes that because these works are inspired by a kind of 'holy art' (i.e. calligraphy), they originally represent the supernal *Kalam*, and guide those viewers who are familiar with this art to that spiritual world.

Ehsai and Reza Mafi (1943–82), another leading member of the *Naqqashi-khatt* trend, were close friends both in their ideology and works. Mafi had finished the Society of Iranian Calligraphers (*Anjuman-i Khushnivisan-i iran*) course in 1968–69 when he began his major *Naqqashi-khatt* experiences. But his initial *Naqqashi-khatt* works date from 1966 when he was studying at the society. He began his creative career with semi-coloured Siyah-mashq paintings in the early 1970s, but soon changed his style to work more freely.

Although Mafi was a professional calligrapher, in comparison with works of other artists of his group some of his *Naqqashi-khatt* pieces were more independent of the calligraphic conventions. While his initial attempts were comparable to some of the famous Siyah-mashq works of the traditional masters of the *nasta'liq* script, he differed – even in these works – from those original masters of calligraphy, by reason of the different sizes of letters and his rhythmic compositions, in which the pictorial values of the elements (calligraphic letters) and their compositional function were privileged over calligraphic skill (Fig. 27.3). In his later *Naqqashi-khatt* works this quality so increases that the visual and spatial composition is more important than content. Towards the end of his life, he used elegant brown and beige curves with great freedom of expression. As a neo-calligraphist, Mafi brought a fresh attitude towards the aesthetics of traditional handwriting during his professional career. Pakbaz remarks that his last work, which is

in the collection of Akbar Seif Nasseri, was made on his deathbed and illustrates well the extent of his minimalist style.[33] In his own words, 'scripts in general and *nasta'liq* in particular are extremely rich in form. Their ups and downs, tension and curls are hugely expressive.'[34] In the latter years of his life, Mafi also created a series of monochrome *Naqqashi-khatt* works inspired by the poems of the famous Iranian modernist poet and painter, Sohrab Sepehri (1928–80).

Nasrollah Afjai (b.1933) is another professional calligrapher who finished the Society of Iranian Calligraphers' course in 1963–64 but later followed the trend of *Naqqashi-khatt*. He maintains that the function of calligraphy in *Naqqashi-khatt* will not destroy the true respectability of calligraphic conventions and their origins. In Afjai's case, as a professional calligrapher, this belief comes from his respect for traditional calligraphy. For this reason, therefore, it seems that he has never resorted to the aesthetic norms of abstract imagery because this would have meant contravening calligraphic conventions, thereby deforming the form of the image. In other words, he has never sacrificed traditional calligraphic standards for any other artistic norm.

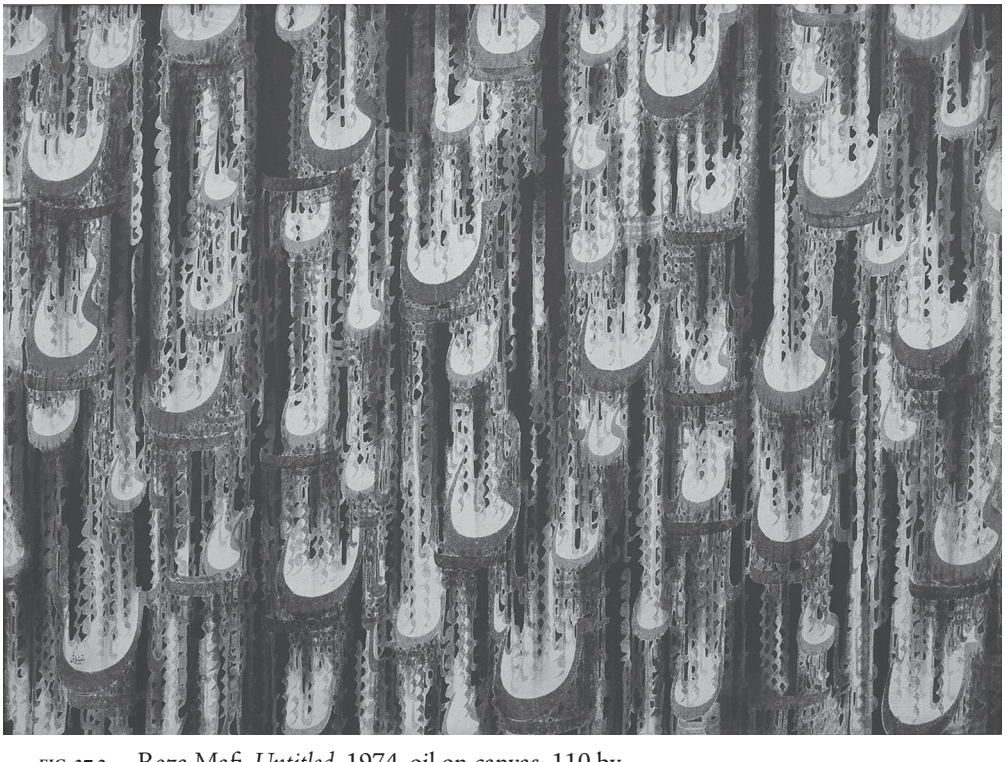

FIG. 27.3 Reza Mafi, *Untitled*, 1974, oil on canvas, 110 by 150cm, private collection.

Afjai has produced a variety of *Naqqashi-khatt* works with diverse types of script including Kufic, *mu'aliqi*, *thuluth*, *nasta'liq* and *shikasteh*, in which the meaningful literary and religious content is the common feature. He began to use *Naqqashi-khatt* style in 1972, with repetitive signature-like calligraphic writing, shaped by rapid actions of a free hand. In those works he followed the calligraphic style to produce rhythmical forms by using the letters of the alphabetical. Later, in 1973–76, he used the Mu'aqili, Kufic and *thuluth* scripts, in which he intended to present the movement of the letters on two-dimensional canvases. His play on the forms of classical calligraphy reminds us of both the merging of the literary and the decorative function in the art, architecture and writing of past Irano-Islamic culture, and in the narrative and formal quality of the decorated letter in medieval manuscripts, invariably the precursor to a verbal text. After the use of precise principles of classical calligraphy, in his Siyah-mashqs Afjai tended to construct a perspective in his canvases with a gradual change from thick to thin lines and vice versa. In some of his galaxy-like compositions, which were presented in the 1990s, the most important part of a Qur'anic or poetic verse was emphasised by increasing the size of the calligraphy to distinguish it from the surrounding countless tiny words. The whole compositional atmosphere of these canvases was imbued with a constellation-like space.

It was clear that after the 1979 Islamic Revolution radical changes would occur in the artistic policy of the state. One of the important impacts of the Revolution on such neo-traditional movements as *Saqqa-khaneh*, whose lack of commitment to the Islamic Revolution and its aspirations and whose works, with their modernistic aspects, had been greatly supported by the pre-revolutionary state as an 'official art', was that the school's artists mostly migrated abroad; those who stayed had no opportunity to present their works.[35] On the other hand, the artists of the *Naqqashi-khatt* tendency were able to continue their artistic career in the post-revolutionary period. That was mainly because their works already contained religious or literary narrative and were directly related to the Islamic tradition emphasised by the new regime.[36] It should be noted that although no solid artistic planning could be seen in the post-revolutionary era, especially in the first decade, most kinds of traditional arts such as miniature painting, calligraphy, *Qahveh-khaneh* (coffee-house) painting and classical poetry flourished. Among others, the traditional calligraphers at the Society of Iranian Calligraphers started to develop their activities throughout the country.[37] So the *Naqqashi-khatt* artists, who were also eminent calligraphers, were able to continue presenting their works.

The new atmosphere of artistic activity in the post-revolutionary period caused the *Naqqashi-khatt* artists to assert that their source of inspiration had been the Islamic calligraphic forms in the Irano-Islamic traditions, including art, architecture

and the various forms of classical calligraphy. They considered themselves the heirs of traditional Muslim artists. They denied any relationship with the *Saqqa-khaneh* school, even receiving inspiration from it. However, today such successful *Naqqashi-khatt* artists as Afjai confirm the leading role of the *Saqqa-khaneh* movement and its innovative and popular artists in the formation of their trend and work.

Although Jalil Rasouli (b.1947) started his professional career as a calligrapher and neo-calligrapher (*Naqqashi-khatt*) during the mid-1970s, his effective presence as a neo-calligrapher became known in the post-revolutionary period, specifically during the 1980s and 1990s. He is an artist who tends to experiment with various techniques in order to find a way for his calligraphic style. Rasouli, in his early works in the late 1970s and early 1980s, presented figurative shapes formed by religious, mainly Qur'anic, verses in *thuluth*. This usage was associated with some written shapes of scripts from the nineteenth century in which different figures (specifically birds and animals) were formed out of meaningful words. Rasouli's method, while employing *chiaroscuro* in the words, is comparable with some of Ehsai's earlier canvases. In his monochrome works, his commitment to some of the conventional principles of classical calligraphy, such as writing a meaningful text or sentence (for example a Qur'anic or poetic verse) and obeying the exact rules of the form, stands as testimony to his wish to be considered an established calligrapher. Gradually during his long career, however, the importance of calligraphic skill and clarity of words and letters have been replaced by the purity of the visual relationship between forms and colours, although he is still committed to a denotative *Naqqashi-khatt* with a specific (religious) message.

Among other calligraphers who sought new functions for calligraphy in calligraphic composition is Gholam'Ali Ajali (b.1939). Ajali's experiences in *Naqqashi-khatt* are not very varied; rather he has preferred to continue his artistic career practising his own style, named *Gulgasht*.[38] In the first series of *Gulgasht*, an accumulation of thousands of letters varying from thick to minute is used to construct a specific shape of nature (tree, mountain, bread etc.) or even a human portrait. In his later works in the late 1990s and 2000s, the monochrome letters of the *nasta'liq* and *thuluth* scripts have been written on a monotone background. In these works, in which the whole shape of the picture is formed from numerous letters and words, the necessity of harmony between the literary text and the image – and also his calligraphic skill – is emphasised.

Sedaghat Jabbari (b.1961), who started practising his neo-calligraphic paintings in the 1990s, was first influenced by the works of his teacher Mohammad Ehsai. Articulating the calligraphic forms and words, with reference to standard calligraphic scripts, Jabbari then shifted into a more abstract orientation. Having been trained in both traditional calligraphy and graphic design at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Tehran University, he tried to fuse these two viewpoints in his works. In his latest artistic

phase, he shows a drastic departure from traditional calligraphy, by experimenting with different techniques, such as brush and paint on canvas. The words and characters in these works no longer have the standard clarity and so do not communicate to their viewers through the precise content they carry; instead they display themselves as mere visual elements wrapped in colours and textures (Plate 31).

As already mentioned, unlike the *Naqqashi-khatt* tendency, during the post-revolutionary period letterism did not continue under the founders of this style in Iran. However, the impact of this approach can be observed in the works of a new generation of artists whose works are notable in Iranian post-revolutionary national Biennials[39] and other major exhibitions both inside and outside the country throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. During these decades, there have also been several younger artists – painters, photographers or those who are working in new media – whose works parallel those of the pioneers.

The career of ceramicist, sculptor and painter Fereydoon Mambeigi (1940–2009) was established, mainly as a painter, in the post-revolutionary period. A graduate of both the Tehran Faculty of Decorative Arts and then Rome Academia di Belle Arti, his works epitomise the same trend as those of the letterists, now with clear reference to East Asian art. Despite featuring different forms of calligraphic methods, Mambeigi's canvases represent him as a devotee of modernist abstraction, particularly his obvious interest in American post-World War II Abstract Expressionism. His paintings presented during the 1990s and 2000s before his death perceptibly show this interest. In other words, Mambeigi's mixed-media canvases are an incorporation of basic forms of Islamic and East Asian calligraphy in concert with a modernist reference.

Rafat Negarandeh (b.1947), a letterist artist active mainly in the 1980s and 1990s, is a painter whose style and beliefs are very close to the artists of *Saqqa-khaneh* in terms of their creative use of traditional materials, including calligraphy. The ornamental forms in his colourful *shikasteh*-like calligraphic canvases are not aimed at presenting any representative form, definitely literary or other kinds of narrative content; rather two-dimensional elements of calligraphy and colour are brought together to create a mystical atmosphere associated with Persian mystical words. His strong compositions are constructed with the use of harmonic colour in the background and colourful letters of equal size in the foreground. Sometimes some geometric silhouette-like coloured forms in the background tend to create a mysterious space in which such letters as 'abracadabra' and 'devotions' can be imagined.

The use of calligraphic forms in the works of Iranian artists, now with a variety of approaches – from dealing with identity, an obsession to social concerns[40] to a satirical and critical approach towards the use of calligraphy and criticism of its exoticism[41] – has been continuous. One can name a wide range of artists such as Golnaz Fathi

(b.1972), Farhad Moshiri (b.1963), Sadegh Tirafkan (b.1965) and Vali Fattahzadeh as representatives of these approaches, including the use of letterism. The ironic, sometimes humorous, language has become a common method to criticise exoticism, and as a metaphorical reaction against united sacred values defined by the post-revolutionary officials. It is now also argued that the artists' identities appear to be built for the needs of the world culture exhibition industry or as a means to win the sympathy of outsiders.[42] In the recent works of Iranian artists, created in various media and presented in numerous auctions or overseas exhibitions, cultural confrontations could be based on formulae and even coded typical indigenous elements, calligraphy included. It is also stated that a group of Iranian artists, have been successful outside the country, perhaps because of this exoticism. It is the fact, however, that the question of how a contemporary work of art could take on a so-called Irano-Islamic form, has on many occasions – as in similar cases elsewhere in the Middle East and Islamic world – led to the use of calligraphic patterns as a solution. Here, some professional calligraphers who show the same consideration and respect for traditional calligraphic conventions as the pioneers of *Naqqashi-khatt* have also been active in this period. Among others, one can mention the name Asadollah Kiani (b.1946), Alireza Karami (b.1949), Einoddin Sadeghzadeh (b.1965) and Hamid Ajami (b.1962). These recent works have been criticised by both traditional calligraphers and art critics[43] because they lack the authentic characteristics of classical calligraphy on the one hand and are deficient in artistic profundity on the other. Hence apart from the complexities that Iranian art has had to experience during its recent history, and verities of artistic perspectives, neo-calligraphism exists vigorously and will continue its challenging position.

NOTES

1 This article is originally based on a section of my unpublished PhD thesis ('Contemporary Iranian Art: Neo-traditionalism during the 1960s and 1990s') at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, submitted in 2004. It was, however, revised during my post-doctoral fellowship at Oxford University in 2008 with the support of the British Academy, ESRC and AHRC, to all of which I am very grateful. I am also indebted to Professor James Allan of the KRC, my host in Oxford, for his support and encouragement throughout my fellowship there. I should also like to express my gratitude to the institutions and collectors who gave me permission for works in their care to be reproduced in this article for the first time. I should also thank those artists who gave me the opportunity for interviews and provided me with access to their private collections.

The name *Saqqa-khaneh* was first employed at the time of the Third Tehran Biennial in 1962 by the art critic and writer Karim Emami. This name was initially applied to the

works of artists (both in painting and sculpture) who used some elements of votive Shi'i art in the modern form. It gradually came to be applied to all the various forms of modern Iranian painting and sculpture which used traditional-decorative elements or shapes. For a comprehensive explanation of the movement, see Keshmirshekan 2005: 607–30.

2 This classification is based on the visual aspect of their works and also their attitudes, aiming to simplify and express the variety of forms of neo-calligraphic tendency in Iran.

3 Our usage of this word does not exactly refer to the Lettrism, the Parisian avant-garde movement of the 1940s to 1970s. Rather, the important commonality of the Iranian neo-calligraphist artists of this group and *lettristes* is in their use of the letters as a main visual element through a fragmentary and un-literary approach.

4 This term consists of two words: *naqqashi*, meaning painting, and *khatt*, meaning script. The combination of these two words is used to denote those paintings which have basically been produced by professional calligraphers, as well as painters. Nasrollah Afjai, one of the prominent artists of this group, claims that he was the first person to use the term *Naqqashi-khatt* for his exhibition in 1974 at the Seyhoon Gallery, Tehran. He describes how he was thinking up a title to match that of his first *Naqqashi-khatt* exhibition. In a meeting with his fellow artists and poets, Parviz Kalantari, the painter, and Esmail Shahroudi, the poet, Afjai suggested the term *Naqqashi-khatt*. Shahroudi recommended the word *khattashi* (in reference to the word *karikalimatur*, which is a combination of two words, caricature and *kalimat*, words, and was in common use). Finally, however, Afjai used the term *Naqqashi-khatt* in his exhibition's poster for the first time. (See Kashefi 1993: 67.)

5 It is, however, worth noting that there are other terms used by such art historians as Wijdan Ali. In her book, *Modern Islamic Art*, she classifies different calligraphic schools in the contemporary Islamic world by using various terms such as 'the Neo-classical Style', 'the Modern Classical Style' and 'Calligraphiti' (see Ali 1997: 165–68). According to her definition, the two latter styles have similarities with *Naqqashi-khatt* and letterism, although they are not quite the same as in our definition. Therefore, here the use of *Naqqashi-khatt* and 'letterism' is preferred.

6 For example, as Schimmel addresses, 'pious Arabic sentences, invocations of 'Ali, and short prayers are found on *nasta'liq* pages, but the major achievement of calligraphers was to copy classical Persian literature, particularly poetry …' (1990: 59).

7 Schimmel 1990: 45.

8 Welch 1979: 38.

9 There might be, as Ali argues, artists who had already practised calligraphic painting in the Islamic world (see Ali 1997: 152–56). However, even if this argument is accepted, artists of *Saqqa-khaneh* were pioneers in approaching calligraphy in a purely abstract form and un-literary content in Iran.

10 Galloway 2000: 96, 97. One of Tanavoli's close friends who was first influenced by the calligraphic movement in Iran was Siah Armajani (b.1939; he has lived and worked in the US since early 1960s). His initial works in this period, which lasted just a short time,

showed similar characteristics to those of the works of such letterists as Zenderoudi. See Venetia Porter's essay in this volume.

11 Reviewing written works by critics (such as Pakbaz 1974: 31) and art sections of the journals and magazines in those eras, we can find this confusion in many articles and reports. This misunderstanding was also even suggested later, in the post-revolutionary period.

12 For examples of this category of neo-calligraphic works in the Islamic world, see Porter 2006.

13 From these artists' point of view, 'international art styles' basically include all the dominant global idioms of today's art, as practised all over the world.

14 One of the major characteristics of traditional calligraphy is its dependency on the *kalam* (word). It has been said that the emergence of calligraphy and its permanent presence in the Islamic world as a form of art is the main reason for its inseparability from sacred *kalam* and later literature.

15 There were five Tehran Biennials before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The first was held in 1958. This was in fact an influential event in introducing modern art to Iran. The first four Biennials included the works of Iranian artists, which reflected official sanctioning of modern artistic movements. These events were seminal cultural moments that epitomised the introduction of modernism proper. The Fifth Tehran Biennial was, however, a regional exhibition in 1966, which included artists from Iran, Pakistan and Turkey.

16 The name of the gallery which started its activity in Tehran in 1964 with the exhibition of the works of Mansur Qandriz, Sirus Malek, Mohammad Reza Jowdat, Faramarz Pilaram, Massoud Arabshahi, Sadeq Tabrizi, Ruyin Pakbaz, Qobad Shiva, Farshid Mesqali, Hadi Hazavehi and Mohammad Mahallati. Subsequently, through the efforts of Jowdat and Pakbaz, this gallery was founded as an active cultural centre holding painting, graphic, photography and sculpture exhibitions, introducing the young artists' works, translating and publishing various art and architecture books, and artistic anthologies (until 1977) over a period of 13 years. This *talar* was first called Talar-i Iran. After the death of Qandriz in 1965 it was renamed Talar-i Qandriz in his memory: see Pakbaz 1999: 154.

17 Pakbaz 1965: 1 (author's translation).

18 Pakbaz 1999: 594.

19 For example the main aim of the Office of Queen Farah, established in the early 1970s, was to support and encourage modernist artistic interests in the country.

20 It was established in 1966. Before the establishment of the society, there were free classes of Iranian calligraphers (*Kilashay-i azad-i Khushnivasi*) in which traditional calligraphy was taught. These classes were started in 1950. In 1966, it developed into a society through the support of the Ministry of Culture and Art.

21 Boroujerdi 1996: 61.

22 He was later influenced in Paris by the Lettriste movement, which was in its high period. However, it is worth noting that he had already began to use calligraphic handwriting and

his invented pseudo-script even before his trip to Paris, in his initial *Saqqa-khaneh* works in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

23 This aspect of Zenderoudi's painting parallels those of Lettristes' works. The movement had its political theory in Dada, based on politics of language. One of the most important aspects of their work was an utopianism and creation of a new system of language. Calling themselves 'new Dadaists', their famous motto was 'Dada has died and *Lettrism* has been born'.

24 'Man hichguneh' 1970: 19.

25 Art Informel (Informalism; Lyrical Abstraction): 'Term coined in 1950 by the French critic Michel Tapié, primarily in relation to the work of Wols, and subsequently applied more generally to a movement in European painting that began in the mid-1940s and flourished in the 1950s as a parallel development to Abstract Expressionism (especially action painting) in the USA. Sometimes referred to as Tachism, Art Autre or Lyrical Abstraction, it was a type of abstraction in which form became subservient to the expressive impulses of the artist, and it was thus diametrically opposed to the cool rationalism of geometric abstraction. Following the lead of Surrealist automatism, current in Surrealism, Art informel pictures were executed spontaneously and often at speed, so as to give vent to the subconscious of the artist' (Grove Dictionary of Art, http://www.groveart.com).

26 Galloway 2000: 97.

27 They were both classmates for a while at the Faculty of Decorative Arts (*Hunarkadeh-i hunar-hay-i taz'ini*).

28 One such work found its way to the Venice Biennale, where it was later purchased for the New York Museum of Modern Art (MOMA): Emami 1971: 356.

29 This group started its activity with the collaboration of some prominent artists including Marcos Grigorian, Massoud Arabshahi, Gholamhossein Nami, Sirak Melkonian, Abdolreza Daryabeygi, Morteza Momayyez and Pilaram himself in 1975. Although this group was very active until 1979, in terms of holding group exhibitions, it did not suggest any particular united style or pictorial manifesto: see Pakbaz 1999: 451.

30 The artist believes this trend had earlier been practised by him. However, there is no reliable document to show any of these works before that exhibition.

31 Pakbaz 1974: 18.

32 The information given here about Ehsai's work comes from a personal interview with the artist, 2001.

33 Pakbaz 2001:132.

34 Pakbaz 2001:132.

35 Pilaram died three years after the Revolution, although he was not active during these years. Zenderoudi is still working on this approach. But because of his absence from the Iranian art scene after the Revolution, his works and presence could not have been very effective within the country.

36 See Keshmirshekan 2006: 131–57.

37 According to the introduction of the catalogue of the 'Iranian Contemporary Art' exhibition in 2001, the Society of Iranian Calligraphers consists of 75 branches in different Iranian cities with more than 32,000 students. See Issa 2001: 24.

38 Literally it means 'sightseeing'; it refers to the formal naturalisation of traditional calligraphy and its contents.

39 The first 'Iranian Painting Biennial' in the post-revolutionary period opened in autumn 1991. The Biennial has been continuing, although not on regular basis, since then.

40 Iranian artist Shirin Neshat (b.1957) has used written texts in her works with socio-political references. However, since she has lived and worked in the US, in quite a different context, her work needs to be explored in a separate discussion and so we have not included her here.

41 See Keshmirshekan 2007: 335–66, and also Keshmirshekan 2010.

42 Keshmirshekan 2010.

43 Ayatollahi 1994: 13–15.

28

MEEM 1958, BY SIAH ARMAJANI

VENETIA PORTER

The subject of this short note is a work by the important Iranian artist Siah Armajani in the collection of the British Museum (Plate 32).[1] Its rich iconography is rooted in Islamic tradition with elements that are particularly connected to the esoteric magical side. Yet this is a modern work which can also be seen as a bridge between 'Islamic' and modern-art traditions. It is one of a series created by Armajani between the mid-1950s and 1960s before he turned to conceptual and public art, for which he is far better known in his adopted country the United States.

Armajani was born in Tehran in 1939. His family's religious background going back several generations was a complex mixture of Christian, Baha'i and Muslim, but immersed in the culture of Shi'i Islam. His father, Agha Khan Armajani, was a merchant and he describes their comfortable home as being filled with books, particularly of Persian poetry. Like his father he went to a Presbyterian school and then spent two and a half years at the University of Tehran studying philosophy. Here he became involved in politics and joined the National Front Party led by Mossadegh.[2] At the age of 21, in 1960, his continued opposition to the Shah meant that it became impossible for him to remain in Iran. He was sent to Macalester College in Minnesota, where his uncle Yahya Armajani taught Middle Eastern history, and here he continued his studies in philosophy.

He had already started to paint while in Tehran, but was not part of any art scene. His father had sent him to study with a painter, a daunting experience, as he recalls: 'He was terrifying. The first day he produced some semi-rotten apples in a dish, gave me some ink and brushes and told me to paint them. He told me I had no talent whatsoever

and that he was taking me only as a favour to my father and he used to strike me on the hands with a long ruler when I made a mistake. I studied with him only six months – I could stand no longer – but in the end I could really draw.'[3] His source of inspiration was 'the culture of South Tehran, where the lower-middle class and the poor lived. These artefacts, street writings, geometry of structures and the general poetry of that place in that era, have stayed with me throughout my life and been a most major influence, along with Persian miniatures.'[4]

His first group of works, produced between 1957 and 1960 and into which the British Museum's *Meem 1958* belongs, are on paper or cloth. These are paintings with words, symbols and images. They include Persian poetry and tiny illustrations – a recurring image is that of the Archangel Gabriel and the winged horse Buraq. There are paintings of fruit (recalling the apples he was made to draw on the first day of his artistic training), there are allusions to the Shi'i imams and the magical tradition with frequent use of numbers and magic squares.[5] The writing is handwriting, not calligraphy, although it often looks like the Persian script *shikasteh*. The works are often entitled *Book*, *Calligraphy*, or *Letter* and in a conscious link with the talismanic shirts that his works so frequently evoke, *Shirt*.[6] Persian poetry played an important part in his life since his childhood (his father regularly read poetry to his family) but with its use in these particular works it has added contemporary meaning. 'Poets are venerated in Persian culture… The poets always have the truth… in Iran poets were the only ones who were allowed to voice political and social protest. If you expressed yourself in prose, you got arrested. If you expressed yourself in poetry, no one would touch you.'[7]

In Minneapolis his first encounter with the art world was as part of a group exhibition at the Walker Art Center, which subsequently purchased a work entitled *Prayer* 1962.[8] He had now started to create works simply made up of words. Painted in ink on canvas and mounted on board, *Prayer* 1962 is covered with waves of black text. Another work in the same series, *Calligraphy* 1964, was acquired by the American collector Abby Grey.[9] Grey had set out during the 1960s to educate herself in art and then to collect, believing that 'art, as a universal language, could serve as a potent vehicle of knowledge, communication, and understanding'.[10] He met her at Macalester College in the autumn of 1960, and she told him that she had just been in Iran, where she had met Parviz Tanavoli and had invited him to the Minneapolis School of Art. He arrived in February 1961, and for Armajani this was the first contemporary Iranian artist that he had met. He and Tanavoli not only became great friends[11] but their work, along with that of other key modernist Iranian artists Faramarz Pilaram (1937–82), Charles-Hossein Zenderoudi (b.1937) and others began to form an important part of the Iranian section of the collection which was to become the Abby Grey Gallery at New York University. However, Armajani became critical of the types of works Grey

was collecting and told her that she should be seeking in addition the works of artists who belonged to parties such as the National Front, the Workers' Party, and the Tudeh (Communist) Party in order to make her collection more comprehensive, advice which to Armajani's chagrin she did not pursue.[12]

While Tanavoli returned to Iran and pioneered the *Saqqa-khaneh* school (discussed by Hamid Keshmirshekan in the previous essay),[13] Armajani remained in the United States. Arabic text, magic squares and Persian poetry, the focus of his early works were gradually supplanted by conceptual and sculptural public artworks in which poetry continued to play a role but now by American poets – such as the words of Walt Whitman incorporated into the railings of Battery Park, New York (1986). There followed massive art projects from the four-storey Staten Island Lighthouse and Bridge (1996) to *Fallujah* (2007), a sculptural installation reflecting upon the horrors of the massacres that took place in that Iraqi town in 2004, following the Iraq war of 2003, and shown at Vitoria, Northern Spain on the seventieth anniversary of Guernica; and in 2009 he produced *Murder in Tehran*. An exhibition of a single sculpture, this was described as 'a powerful formal and political statement born of outrage and solidarity with the Iranian people in the wake of the June 2009 presidential elections there'.[14]

Meem 1958 is made up of four strips of plain muslin cloth of uneven length each of which is painted with a series of images and texts, and includes repeated invocations to God, stamps from a seal ring, magical squares and four brass dice. A brilliant turquoise blue dominates the upper and lower strips with metallic bronze highlights and patches of red elsewhere. In discussions with the artist about this work[15] it becomes clear that, as with the other works in this series, this is far from a random selection of elements but that each connects to a variety of inter-linked traditions which includes Persian painting, stories from the Qur'an, numerology, Shi'ism, Sufism and divination.

BAND 1

In the centre *bi-ism Allah* (in the name of God). On the far right is the Archangel Gabriel, through whom the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, and who took him on his 'Night Journey' (*mi'raj*). Further in he is depicted in flight, his face turned to the right. On the other side is Noah's Ark, depicted as it is described in the Qur'an (11:42) – 'so the ship floated with them on the waves…' – and with the dove to the right.[16] The first of a sequence of repeated texts *ya Huwa* (oh He), a popular invocation – a shortened version of *Huwa Allah Ahad* ('He is God, the Only One') – which recurs throughout the work, is inscribed in narrow bands to the left and right.

BAND 2

The repeated *ya Huwa* is on both sides: to the right on six horizontal lines, on the left in a vertical panel starting with *ya* on four lines and then *Huwa*. The Archangel Gabriel seems to nestle into the end of the text – in the style of drawing, with the influence of Persian painting in clear evidence. There are two other interesting elements here: the repeated stamps of a rectangular seal and a large letter *mim* in green. A seal ring made of carnelian was inherited by Armajani from his grandfather. On it in *nasta'liq* script are the words *Allah* and *Muhammad*.[17] The stamps from the seal are repeated between the two *ya Huwa* panels, creating an almost abstract pattern and are also stamped into sealing wax in the band below. This seal impression also appears in some of his other works.

To the left of the band is a large letter *mim* painted in green, representing the Prophet Muhammad, being the first letter of his name. Armajani suggests other subliminal references that take us deeper. Through the system of numerology known as Abjad, the *mim* equals 40.[18] The number 40 has Sufi resonance which Armajani describes: 'the letter *Meem* has two aspects, one is the spiritual side and the other the physical side. These two sides are veiled by 40 veils and in order to lift these veils, a person must be in seclusion and meditate in the remembrance of God for 40 days.'[19]

BAND 3

This starts with the repetition of the word *salam* (greetings), and under the first *salam* on the right, a text in Persian: 'follow this line' – a phrase Armajani saw written on walls by children walking home from school in Tehran. In the centre, there are four brass dice attached with string and three patches of stamped sealing wax around which are the numbers *yek*, *do*, *seh* (one, two, three). They also look like blood, perhaps alluding to the themes of Shi'i martyrdom. These dice are known as 'geomantic' dice. They are made of brass and were used for a popular form of divination in Iran, known as *raml*. There are examples from the eighteenth century and later, and they are still made and used in Iran today.[20] They are produced in sets of four, each dice has four sides, on which are punched different numbers of dots. The four examples here are in two sizes. The smaller ones are turned to 2, 3, 3, 2 and 2, 3, 2, 3; the larger ones are turned to 4, 4, 3, 2 and 4, 4, 3, 3. The geomancer (*rammal*) would toss the dice, and depending on the sequence of the numbers that fell out would proceed to tell the fortune of the client. Representation of the dice and the dots also appears in the first of the *ya Huwa* panels at the top (2, 3, 4, 3).

BAND 4

The fourth row begins on the right with a figure at prayer and an image of Buraq, the winged horse on whom the Prophet rode to make the Night Journey, a frequent image in popular religious iconography.[21] Underneath is the artist's signature and full name, Isma'il Siahvush Armajani and the year according to the Persian (*Jalali*) calendar, 1337 (1958), repeated three times. There follows a table made up of three columns and five rows. In the wide centre are a sequence of numbers which often appear in this form on amulets.[22] On either side are a series of names which consist of several of the 'Fourteen Immaculates' revered by the Shi'i , but not in any particular order. On the right starting from the top: *'Ali*, *Ja'far*, *Fatima*, *'Ali*, *Musa*. On the left, *Hasan* (or *Husayn*), *Muhammad*, *'Ali*, *'Ali*, *Muhammad*.[23] In the long green panel is the invocation to God, *ya sahib al-'asr wa'l zaman* ('oh Lord of the age and fate'). The final section consists of seven three-by-three magical squares. The use of magical squares is an integral part of a magical vocabulary that appears on magic bowls, amulets etc. from about the twelfth century onwards.[24] Generally the three-by-three square appears as shown below and is known as *buduh* after the numbers in the four corners are turned into letters, *ba* (2), *dal* (4), *waw* (6), *ha* (8), using the Abjad system. This is believed to be the earliest of the magical squares, having been developed by Jabir ibn Hayyan in the eighth century to ease the pains of childbirth.

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

In this square, the numbers in each of the rows in whatever direction they are placed need to be so configured that they make up the same number, 15, and this is the case with all magical squares whatever their size. Here Armajani has configured the squares in different sequences, and only occasionally do the lines actually add up to 15. He has used the characteristically Persian heart-shaped form of the number five.

CONCLUSION

With *Meem* 1958 and the other works in the series – in this brief phase between 1957 and 1964 before he turned to conceptual art – Armajani's art reflects his preoccupation and love of the traditions of his native Iran. Tomkins suggests that he carried this on in America 'perhaps in an attempt to hang on to his Middle-Eastern roots in the heart of the American Middle West'.[25] He also notes that being Christian did not – according

to Armajani – prevent him from being immersed in Islamic and in particular Shi'i culture. There were other artists in Iran at this time also defining their artistic practice through an engagement with their own Iranian traditions – poetry, calligraphy or Shi'i iconography, creating vibrant new art through the use of these themes. The term coined for such art was *Saqqa-khaneh* – whether it was a 'movement' as such remains a matter for debate. Armajani, however, his life now in America, was from this moment on a very different trajectory.

NOTES

1 This article is dedicated to James Allan, who introduced me to Islamic art and whose own openness and questioning taught me to be interested in all aspects of the subject and much else besides. I am extremely grateful to Siah Armajani for the delightful and informative correspondence we have had concerning this work.

2 Mohammed Mossadegh, a reformer and democrat, was elected Prime Minister in 1951 and was overthrown by an American–British coup in 1953. He was jailed for three years and was then under house arrest until his death in 1967.

3 Tomkins 1960: 52.

4 Personal communication from the artist.

5 Some of these works were reproduced in a pamphlet on the occasion of an exhibition of Armajani's work at Meulensteen Gallery, New York, September–October 2011.

6 Balaghi, http://www.nyu.edu/greyart/collection/iranian%20art/essayarmajani; Meulensteen 2011.

7 Balaghi and Gumpert 2002: 31, as quoted from Lisa Lyons, 'The poetry garden by Siah Armajani, *Design Quarterly* 160 (1994): 11.

8 http://collections.walkerart.org/item/object/7627 (1962.53). There are other later works in the collection as well. Armajani talks about being stung by criticism of an earlier work using script which was dismissed by critics as 'just writing' (personal communication).

9 Grey Art Gallery, New York University Art Collection. Gift of Abby Weed Grey, G1975.82.

10 Gumpert Reflections on the Abby Grey Collection online, http://www.nyu.edu/greyart/collection/iranian%20art; Balaghi and Gumpert 2002.

11 Pococke 2011: 9.

12 Personal communication.

13 For other discussions of these artists and *Saqqa-khaneh* see Balaghi and Gumpert 2002, chapters by Shiva Balaghi and Fereshteh Daftari; Issa 2001; Galloway 2000; Pococke 2011.

14 http://www.meulensteen.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/as_chevalier_award_10.pdf.

15 This was in the context of its inclusion in 'Word into Art Dubai' (2008), and it was published in the catalogue of that exhibition: Porter 2008: 90.

16 There are numerous references in the Qur'an to Noah: 'Abd al-Baqi 1996: 815.

17 Armajani's grandfather owned a number of seals which he used in his business and for other purposes.

18 The total number for the word Muhammad is 132, three times for the letter M on account of the *shadda* of the central *mim*, *ha'* (8) and *dal* (4).

19 Personal communication.

20 The term 'geomantic dice' is in fact a misnomer, as true geomancy, *'ilm al-raml*, employs a different method and the casting of tableaux which are produced and the meanings deciphered by means of manuals. Confusingly the use of divination by dice is also called *raml*, but Savage-Smith describes this as more of a form of lot casting or sortilege. For a detailed discussion see E. Savage-Smith in Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997: 148 and Savage-Smith 2004: 219.

21 Stochi 1988: 86ff.

22 See Porter 2011: 175ff. The combinations sometimes with the addition of letters may refer to the names of angels.

23 The list of the 'Fourteen Immaculates' is Muhammad, Fatima, 'Ali, Hasan, Husayn, 'Ali, 'Ali, Muhammad, Ja'far, Musa, 'Ali, Muhammad, 'Ali, Hasan, Muhammad.

24 Savage-Smith 1997: 59ff; Porter 2011: 131ff.

25 Tomkins 1990: 53, 50.

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INDEX

Page numbers in *italics* refer to illustrations and captions to illustrations

Abarquh (Iran): *jami'* 165
'Abbas I, Shah (r.1587–1629) 413
'Abbas II, Shah (r.1642–66) 416
'Abbas (lamp manufacturer) 236
Abbasids 350, *351*
  blue-on-white ceramics 339, 340–41
  bronze ewers 229
  caliphs 135, 220, 221
  'glaze-decorated' wares 340–42, 343, 344, 347*n*27, 352, *353*, Plates 13, 14
  iron window grille 220, 221
  lustre ceramics 341, 380, 387–88, *388*, 398
'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Badri 265
'Abd al-Basit al-'Almawi 265
'Abd al-Karim ibn al-'Turabi al-Mawsili 76*n*100, 83*n*152
'Abd al-Malik, 'Amirid regent 303, 305
'Abd al-Malik, Ottoman prince 326
'Abd al-Malik, Umayyad caliph (r.685–705) 337
'Abd al-Rahman 309, 315*n*26
'Abd al-Rahman III (r.912–61) 302, 304, 306, 310
'Abd al-Rahman, Sultan (r.1822–59) *324*, 327, 331
'Abd al-Rahman ibn Sinan al-Bal'labakki al-Najjar: astrolabe 82–83*n*150
'Abdallah al-Ghalib, Sultan 333*nn*35, 50
'Abdallah ibn al-Shaykh, Sultan (r.1613–24) 325
'Abdullah, Amir of Sind 136
Abu Bakr ibn al-Hajj/Hajji Jaldak 72*n*60, *see* Ibn Jaldak
Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Muzhir 184*n*23
Abu Hafs Sughdi: distich 400–1
Abu Ishaq Inju: candlestick 90, 93
Abu Zayd 397, 405–6
  lustre-painted bowl 397
  lustre-painted ewer (St Louis Art Museum) 397, 398–400, *399*, 401, 404–5, 406, Plate 24
  mina'i bowl (LA County Museum of Art) 404
  mina'i bowl (Metropolitan) 405
Abu'l Fath Mawdud 16
Abu'l Qasim ibn Sa'd bin Muhammad: pen-box with octagon motif *31*
Abu'l Qasim Mahmud ibn Sanjarshah, ewer in name of 45, 76*nn*105,106
al-'Adil Katbugha, Sultan (694–96/1294–96) 221
Afghanistan 131, 132, 134, 136
  textiles 261
  see also Ghaznavids; Ghazni; Herat
'Afif al-Din ibn Marahil al-Salmani 16, 17
Afjai, Nasrollah 443, 452–53, 454, 457*n*4
Ağa-Oğlu, Mehmed 15, 32
Agatha, St 207, 208
Ahmad ibn Isma'il, Samanid amir 107
Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad, Banijurid amir 106
Ahmad ibn Muhriz 318
Ahmad Khan, Sultan 94, 95
Ahrar, Khwaja 165
Aimel, G. 322
Ajali, Gholam 'Ali 454
Ajami, Hamid 456
Ajofrin, Francisco de 363
Akbar, Mughal emperor (r.1556–1605) 414
'Ala' al-Din Bahman Shah 165
'Ala' al-Din Husayn (Jahansuz) 151
'Alawi dynasty 318, 320, 327, 330, 331
Albinus, Bernhard Siegfried: *Tabulae sceleti et musculorum corporis humani* 432
Alchi (Ladakh): Buddhist paintings 137
Aleppo (Syria) 12, 15, 27, 28, 74*n*87, 417, 423
Alhambra, the (Granada) 320, 321, 323
'Ali ibn 'Abdallah al-'Alawi al-Mawsili 55
  ewers 33, 75*n*96
'Ali ibn Abi Talib: poem 402–3
'Ali ibn Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Mawsili 37, 39, 44
  basin (1285) 39, 41, 42, *42*, 77*n*112
  candlestick (in Furusiyya Art Foundation) 78–79*n*121
  candlestick (1282) 39, 41–42, 77*n*112, 79*n*121
  ewer (1275) *38*, 41
'Ali ibn 'Isa, governor of Khurasan 349
'Ali ibn Kasirat 37, 44, 54
  candlestick (for Sultan Lajin's *mihrab*) 39, *40*, 79*n*121
'Ali ibn 'Umar ibn Ibrahim al-Sankari al-Mawsili 55
'Ali ibn Yahya: inlaid penbox 23, 32
al-'Alim, Muhammad 318
Allegory of Alchemy, The 91
Almohads 313
Amid (Diyarbakir, Turkey) 16, 17
'Amirid ivory caskets 312
'Amr ibn Layth 102
Amsterdam *see* Rijksmuseum
anatomical drawings 430–32, *430*, *431*

al-Andalus
ivory caskets and pyxides 247, 301–13
metalwork 301–2
pillar lampstands 289, 292, 293
Andaraba: mint/coins 101–2, 103, 104, *104*, 106, 107, *109*, 110
Angel, Philips van 423*n*5
animal motifs
on Belitung metal items 355
cast bronze (eastern Iran) 132
Fatimid bronzes 219, 236
on Iraqi lustrewares 355
Khurasan 145–46
see also specific animals
Antioch: tinners/tinned artefacts 272, *273*
Aqsunqur al-Nasiri 'al-Maliki' al-Muzaffari 176
arabesques (motifs) 27, 43, *43*, 231, 232
Arabshahi, Massoud 458*n*16, 459*n*29
architecture
Ghaznavid 261
Marinid 321–22, 323
Nasrid 321–22, 323
Ottoman 156
see also mosques
Armajani, Agha Khan 461, 462
Armajani, Siah 457*n*10, 461–63
Fallujah 463
Meem 1958 461, 462, 463–65, Plate 32
Staten Island Lighthouse and Bridge 463
Armajani, Yahya 461
Armenians 413–15, 420, *see* Astuacatur
Art Autre 459*n*25
Art Informel 446, 459*n*25
Artes de México (magazine) 374
Artuqids 16, 17
Asandamur al-Nasiri, Amir 176–77, 178, 179
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford 379
blue-on-white dish (Iraqi) 353, Plate 16
Newberry Collection of embroideries 253–63
al-Ashraf Khalil, Sultan 39, 265
astrolabes 23, 75–76*n*100, 82–83*nn*150, 152
palimpsest painting 428–29, *429*
Astuacatur/Bogdan Saltanov 413, 414–15, 417, 420, 421, 422, 423
book of Sibyls 422, Plate 25
portrait of Fedor Alekseevich Romanov 422
St John the Theologian 422
Atabek metalwork 15, 20, *21*
Athens *see* Benaki Museum
Atıl, Esin 383, 384
Avalokiteshvara (Kashmiri bronze) 135, 137
Avar tombs (Croatia) 235
Avenel, William 295
'Ayn Dara, Syria: bronze hoard 224
Ayyubids 15, 16, 17, 27, 28
coins 111
embroideries 260, 261, Plate 11
metalwork 15, 20, *21*, 28, 226, 230, 237, 245, 265
al-Azdi 356–57
al-'Azm, Khalil *see* al-Qasimi, Muhammad Sa'id

Babur, Mughal emperor 150
Bacon, Roger: *Opus maius* 430, 437
Badi' palace, Marrakesh 317–18
carving styles 322–27, 328, 330, 331
columns and capitals 320–22, 331
spolia used in Fez and Marrakesh *324*, 325, 328–29, *329*, 330, 331
spolia used in Meknes 318, 319–20, 327, 330
Badr al-Din Lu'lu', Mosul ruler (1233–59) 12, 15, 17, 23, 28–29, 32, 45, 46, 54, 55, 74*n*86, 81*n*139, 85*n*168, 149
basin for 26–27
candlestick for 24–25, *25*, 35, 37, 43, *43*, 45
'Munich' tray for 17, *18*, 19, 25–26, 28, 30, *31*, 32, 41
tray for (with graffiti; V&A) 24, 73*n*74
Baer, Eva 240, 245
al-Baghawi: *Masabih al-Sunna* 24
Baghdad 53, 134, 219
Abbasid caliphs 220, 221
Buyid regime 220
coppersmiths 278
Fatimid caliphate 220, 221
Khan Mirjan 165
Bahmanids 155, 165
Bahrami, Mehdi 406*n*2
Baker, Patricia (1995) 258
Baktimur al-Hajib 221
Bal'ami: *Tarikhnama* 93
Balkh (Tukharistan) 102
die engraver ('Mujib') 101, 102, 110
dirhams 103–4, *104*, *105*, 106–7, *108*, 109, 110, 111
mint 101, 102, *103*, *111*, *112*
Ballana (Egypt): box hinges 244
Baltimore *see* Walters Art Museum
Bamberg *see* Bumiller Collection
Banijurids: coinage 101, 106
Baptistère de St Louis (Louvre) 15, 42, 230
Barberini vase (Louvre) 15, 29, 74*n*87, 78*n*120
Bargello (Florence): casket 313
Barletta Cathedral (Bari): bronze box 232–33
Barrucand, Marianne 327
al-Basasiri, Abu'l-Harith Arslan, Abbasid amir 220, 221
basins
by 'Ali ibn Husayn 39, 41, 42, *42*, 77*n*112
Arenberg (Freer Gallery) 92
for Badr al-Din Lu'lu' (Kiev) 26–27
by al-Dhaki (Louvre) 17, 18, 19, *19*, 27, 30, *31*, 32, *36*
with eagle and duck motif (Doha, 13th c.) 41
for Hughes de Lusignan 202, 208
for al-Mansur Nur al-Din and al-Muzaffar Sayf al-Din Qutuz 41
Mamluk (of Elisabeth of Carinthia) 201–9
Mamluk (1250–1361) 209–10
see also bowls
for Sultan Qalawun 41
Basra (Iraq) 356
blue-on-white wares 340, 341, 353, 356–57, *358*, 359, Plate 16
lustreware 341, 354–56, 359, Plate 17
white ceramics 344, 351–52, *353*
Baybars, Mamluk sultan (r.1260–77) 259
al-Bayhaqi 151

Bayqara, Husain 165
Bayt Shabab mines (Lebanon) 273
Bazantay, Pierre 272, *273*
Baznegerd hoard (nr Hamadan) 77*n*106
beakers, Fatimid bronze (from Tiberias) 231
Bel, Alfred 322
Belitung shipwreck 350–51, 352, 354, 355, 357, *358*
Bellini, Gentile 414
bells, casting 267, 270, *270*
Benaki Museum, Athens
  box (al-Hajj Ismail) 72*n*68
  candlestick (1317) 55, 75*n*97
  Fatimid lustre dish 217, Plate 9
Berchem, Max van 13–14, 15, 16, 20, 22, 23, 25
Berlin Album 90
Berlin Museum für Islamische Kunst
  ceramics/sherds 340, 342, 343, 347*n*27, Plates 13, 14
  Egyptian bronze box (11th c.) 232, 240
  Fatimid ivory plaques 217, *218*
  Ilkhanid basin 77*n*110
  Mughal miniatures 150, 151
  octagonal silver gilt dish 114*n*15
Bibby Sons and Co. 120
Bibliothèque Nationale: *'Aja'ib-nama* of Tusi Salmani 95
Bidar (India) 165, 166
  Solah Khamba mosque 165, 166, *166*
Bijapur (India) 165–66
Bikfaya (Lebanon): foundry 270, *270*
bird shapes and motifs
  Andalusi aquamanilia 301
  bronze (in Qal'a Bani Hammad museum, Algeria) 291, 293
  cast bronze (eastern Iran) 132
  duck with long bill (Mosul) 42, *42*
  eagle-and-duck motif (Mosul) 41, 42, *42*
  on Elvira lampstand 289, 290
  falcon (Khurasan) 145, 146
  on Fatimid bronzes (from Tiberias) 229, 231, 235, 236
  on Fatimid embroidery 259
  female face with bird's foot (Fatimid) 227
  flying ducks (Mosul) 42
  fountain heads (Madinat al-Zahra') 301–2
  Garuda eagles (from India) 134
  on lampstands 289–90
  peacock (Khurasan) 145, 146, 147, 148
  on Petralia lampstand 284, *284*, 285, *285*, 286, 287, 290, 291
  Qajar copper cockerel 116
  Qajar sheet-brass peacock 119
Blacas d'Aulps, Pierre Louis Jean Casimir (Duc) de 12
Blacas ewer (Shuja' ibn Man'a al-Mawsili, 1232) 12, 17, *19*, 19–20, 23, 30, *31*, 32, *34*, 41, 53, 54, 73*n*82, 76*n*106
Blair, Sheila 397
blue-and-white/blue-on-white ceramics
  Abbasid 339, 340–41
  Basran/Iraqi 340, 341, 353, 356–57, *358*, 359, Plate 16
  Chinese 353, 354, 356, 357, *358*, 359, 360
Bobrinsky bucket (Hermitage) 76*n*105, 131, 153*n*5
Bodleian Library, Oxford
  Kalila wa Dimna (Mamluk manuscript) 383–84, 387, Plate 20
  'tooth with toothworms' ('modern palimpsest') 428, Plate 27
Bonoinfante de Petralia 295
Borrell, Hector Rivero 371
Boston Museum of Fine Art
  basin dedicated to Sultan Qalawun 41
  candlestick 77*n*110
  candlestick (Ibn Jaldak, 1225) 16, 17, 30, *31*, 33, *34*, 72*n*64, 75*n*98
  ewer (Ibn Jaldak, 1225) *34*
Bosworth, C.E. 151
bottles
  bronze (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 224, *229*, 230, *230*, 236
  silver perfume (from Madinat al-Zahra') 305–6, *307*
bowls
  bronze (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 224, *230*, 230–31, 236
  inlaid (with titles of Sultan Uways) (V&A) 93, 94
  inlaid with silver and gold (Doha) *94*, 94–95
  inlaid with silver and gold (Lyon) 92, *92*, 93
  lustre-painted (Abu Zayd) 397
  lustre-painted (contemporary; Khalili Collection) 401–2, 403
  lustre-painted (with lion and hare; Abbasid) 387–89, *388*
  mina'i (Abu Zayd) 404, 405
  from Raqqa 337–38, *338*, 339
  see also basins
boxes
  Ayyubid 245
  brass (from Caesarea) 232, 239–50, *see under* Caesarea
  bronze (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 224, 232–33, 236, 327, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244
  inlaid, with octagon motif (Mosul) *31*, 75*n*96
  for al-Malik al-'Adil II 71*n*49
  see also caskets; pen-boxes
Braga pyxis 303
brassware
  from Caesarea *see* Caesarea
  Damascene 266–67
  Mosul *flabella* 49–50, *50*
  Qajar (in NMS) 115–26
  with silver inlay 12–16, 52–53, 84*n*156, 90, *90*, 92, *92*, 93, 122
Bray, Luca 370
British Library
  Khamsa of Nizami 94–95, *95*, 233
  *masnawi*s of Khwaju Kirmani 90–91, *91*, 93, 94
  Syriac lectionary 48, 49, *49*
  'Turktazi and the Queen of the Faeries, Turktaz' (Zaman) 422, Plate 26
British Museum 461
  candlestick (Mosul, 1230s) 45, 46, *48*
  Egyptian lustre-painted bowl 245, 246
  glass lamps made for Amir Tuquzdamur 183*n*22
  incense-burner (in name of Badr al-Din Baysari al-Zahiri al-Sa'idi) 184*n*24
  incense-burner with octagon motif (1242) 31, *31*

Meem 1958 (S. Armajani) 461, 462, 463–65, Plate 32
miniature bucket (Mosul) *56*, 57
tankard with recessed rosette (Mamluk) 172, 173
white-glazed storage jar (Iraqi) 354
see also Blacas ewer
Britton, Nancy 259
bronzes
dating 223–24
Fatimid hoard (from Tiberias) 223–38, 242, 243, 248, 291
Fatimid tambourine player 217–19, *219*, 220
tubular object (from Khurasan) 143–52
Brooklyn Museum: basin 203–4
buckets
Bobrinsky (Hermitage) 76*n*105, 131, 153*n*5
bronze (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 225, *230*, 233–34
with guilloche pattern (from Caesarea) 247
miniature (Mosul) *56*, 57
Buddhist images 133, 134, 135, 137
Bukhara (Iran): copper engraving 271, *271*
Bumiller Collection, Bamberg
bronze ewer 228
tubular object (from Khurasan) 143–52
Burgos (Spain): Museo de Bellas Artes
ivory container 310
Silos casket 313, 316*n*42
Burrell Collection, Glasgow: candlestick with openwork finial 45
Burzoe: Pahlavi fables 383–84
Buyids 220
coins 99, 100, 111
Byzantine metalwork 225, 244
Byzantium/Constantinople: silver-inlaid bronze/brass doors 84*n*156

Caesarea: Fatimid hoard 224, 226, 232, 239–50, 291
Caiger-Smith, Alan 246, 387
Cairo (al-Qahira) 11, 220, 255, 260, 261
Birkat al-Ratli 220, 221
al-Hakim mosque and minaret 156, 247
inlayers 22, 37, 39, 272
see also below
Cairo Museum of Islamic Art
Abbasid window grille 220, 221
bowl with hare motif 245–46
candlesticks with knotted Kufic inscription 39, *39*
candlestick for Lajin *mihrab* 39, *40*, 79*n*121
Fatimid bronze tambourine player 217–20, *219*
lustre bowl 218
calligraphy
Damascene engraving 270–71
mashriqi 330
muhaqqaq 444
nasta'liq 444, 445, 447, 450, 451, 453, 454, 464
pseudo script 427, 428–29, 430, 431, 432, 434
Ottoman 56
shikasteh 444, 447, 450, 453, 455, 462
thulth-muhaqqaq 39, *40*, 43
thuluth 189, 191, 444, 453, 454
see also inscriptions; neo-calligraphy
Cambridge *see* Fitzwilliam Museum; Whipple Museum
candlesticks 22, 265
for Abu Ishaq Inju 90, 93
by 'Ali ibn Husayn/workshop 39, 41–42, 77*n*112, 78*n*121
by 'Ali ibn Kasirat (for Lajin's *mihrab*) 39, *40*, 79*n*121
by 'Ali ibn 'Umar ibn Ibrahim al-Sankari 55, 75*n*97
Ayyubid 226
for Badr al-Din Lu'lu' 24–25, *25*, 35, 37, 43, *43*, 45
in Boston Museum of Fine Arts 77*n*110
Cairo (1269) 75*n*96
by Dawud ibn Salama (1248, Louvre) *31*, 31–32, 33, *34*, *36*, 75*n*97
Fatimid 224, *225*, 226, 237
by al-Hajj Isma'il (inlaid by Muhammad ibn Fattuh) 23, 37, *39*, 42, *42*, 43, *44*
by Husayn ibn Muhammad (1257) *38*, 39, *39*, *40*, 41, 42, 77*n*10
by Ibn Jaldak (1225) 16, 17, 20, 30, *31*, 33, *34*, 72*n*64, 75*n*98
for Katbugha *39*
Mosul (British Museum, 1230s) 45, 46, *48*
Mosul (Metropolitan, 1230s) 45–46, *46*, *47*
Mosul, with graffiti (Louvre) 25, *26*
Mosul, with mounted warriors (1220s–30s) 33, 50, *51*, 52, 75*n*98, 80*n*139
by Muhammad ibn Fattuh (inlay) 23, 37, 39, *39*, 42, *42*, 43, *44*, 76*n*106
by Muhammad ibn Hasan 41
with octagonal motifs *31*, 32, 75*n*98, 80*n*138
Qajar 122, *123*, 125
with relief rosettes 33, *34*
Safavid 125
for Sunqur al-Takriti (with knotted Kufic inscription) 39, *39*
for Taj al-Din Abu Durr Badr 77*n*110
see also lampstands
canteen, silver-inlaid (Freer Gallery, 13th c.) 46–49, *49*, 50, *50*, *51*, 52, 76*n*106
Cardenas Sánchez, Enrique 373
carpets, Damascene silver ornamented 276–77
Carter, Howard 255
cartouches 25–26, 231, *232*
caskets
Andalusi (ivory) 247, 301–2, 304, 305, 307, *310*, 310–13 *see also* pyxides
in Bargello (Florence) 313
domed, with rosette as finial (Furusiyya Art Foundation) 76*n*105
inlaid with silver and gold (V&A) 90, *90*
Mamluk (Fitzwilliam Museum) 171–82, Plates 5, 6
Caucasian Royal Archer (anon.) 422
ceramics
Abbasid glaze-decorated wares 337, 339–42, *341*, 343–44, Plates 13, 14
Chinese *see* Chinese ceramics
Iraqi 349–50, 351–53, 354–56, 359
Iznik 326, 345*n*5, 360

Pre-Mongol Iranian glaze-decorated ware 339–40, *342*, 342–43
Puebla/'Talavera' (tin-glaze) 363–67, 374
Talavera de la Reyna 368, *369*, 370–71, *372*, 373, Plates 18, 19
see also lustreware
Cerro Muriano (Spain): lampstand 292
Chamba kingdom 135
Changsha (China): stoneware 351, 354
chatr (parasol) 149, 150, 151
chauris (flywhisks) 149–50
cheetahs (motifs) 400–2, *402*
Cheselden, William 432
Chihil Sutun palace murals, Isfahan 416–17
'Shah Tahmasp holding a reception for Humayun' *418*, 425*n*22
Chinese ceramics 347*n*28, 349, 350, 351, *351*
from Belitung shipwreck 350–51, 352, 354, 355, 357, *358*
blue-and-white 353, 354, 356, 357, *358*, 359, 360
Gonxian wares 351, 352, *352*, 354, 357, *358*, 359
Song 398
Tang 349, 350, 359, 360
chini faghfuri 349
Churchill, Sidney 115
circle motifs 244, 245
Cleveland Museum: al-Dhaki ewer (1223) 17, *18*, 30, *30*, 33, *34*, *36*, 54, 77*n*107
Cockerell, Sir Sidney 181–82
'cogged' wheels (motifs) 53
coins 99
Abbasid 100, 102
from Andaraba mint 101–2, 103, 104, *104*, 106, 107, *109*, 110
Balkh dirhams 103–4, *104*, *105*, 106–7, *108*, 109, 110, 111
Buyid 99–100, 111
engravers' signatures 99–101
inscriptions 99
Ma'din dirham 110, *110*
Nishapur dirham 110, *110*
Samanid 99–100, 110, 111
Umayyad 114*n*16
Cole, Sir Henry 195, 196, 197, 198
Constantine (National Museum of Cirta): bronze bird 298*n*25
Contreras, Jaime 370
Copenhagen *see* David Collection
copper and copper artefacts, Damascene 265, 266
beating 267, *268*
casting 267–68, *269*, 270, *270*
engraving and inlaying 267, *271*, 271–72
tinning 267, 272, *273*, 277
Copts 227, 255
ceramics 242, 339
textiles 253
Córdoba (Spain) 305, 306
Great Mosque 161, 322, 323
see also Madinat al-Zahra'
Coste, Pascal *see* Flandin, Eugène
Courtauld Gallery of Art, London: wallet 55
Cracraft, James 415
crescent moon (motif) *see* 'moon figure'
Crusaders 46, 50, *51*, 80–81*n*139, 221, 236, 255
Cuinet, Vital 278
Cutler, Anthony 139

Dada 446, 459*n*23
Dalton, Ormonde M. 180–81
Damascus 11, 15, 29, 54, 265, 277–78
carpets with silver embroidery 276–77
copper artefacts *see* copper and copper artefacts
firearms/guns 274, 275, 277
goldsmiths/goldworking 265, 267, 276, 277
inlaid metalwork 12, 13, 28, 37–44, 265
iron and steel artefacts 266, 267, 273–76, 277
jewellers 267, 276, 277
lanterns/lantern-makers 267, 272, 278
locksmiths 267, 276
needles/needle-makers 267, 75–76
seal rings 270–71, 276
silver/silver-workers 39, 267, 276–77
swords/sword-makers 267, 273–75
tinners/tinned artefacts 267, 272, 277
Damascus National Museum: bowl (from Raqqa) 337–38, *338*, 339
dapping block (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 235
Daryabeygi, Abdolreza 459*n*29
dating bronzes 223–24
Dawud ibn Salama al-Mawsili 32, *35*
candlestick with octagon motif (1248, Louvre) *31*, 31–32, 33, *34*, *36*, 75*n*97
David Collection of Islamic Art, Copenhagen
lampstand 289, 290, 291
lustre-painted bowl (Abu Zayd) 397
Mughal paintings 150, 151, Plate 3
pen-box ('Ali ibn Yahya) 23, 32
pyxis 312
silk carpet roundel 153*n*13
Davies, Helen 197
Dawrižec'i, Arak'el 417, 420
Dawud, Rasulid sultan of Yemen (r.1296–1322): tray made for 190, 191–92
Dayfa Khatun 74*n*88
Deccan, the 165–66
Delhi 163
Kalan Masjid 159–60
Khirki Masjid 159–60
Denia (Spain): Islamic bronze hoard 224, 291
Deverdun, Gaston 319
al-Dhaki, Ahmad 16, 17, 20, 24, 32, 35, *35*
basin with octagon motif (1238–40; Louvre) 17, 18, 19, *19*, 20, 27, 30, *31*, 32, *36*
ewer with relief rosette (1223; Cleveland Museum) 17, *18*, 30, *30*, 33, *34*, *36*, 54, 77*n*107
'Homberg' ewer (1242; Keir Collection) 33, *34*, 71*n*49, 228
Diaz, Manuel Bartlett, governor of Puebla 365
dice, 'geomantic' 464
Didda, Queen (r.980–1003) 135
Dietersen, Hans 421
Diez Albums 96*n*2, 153*n*13
Dimand, Maurice 15, 32, 46
Dioscorides: *Materia Medica* 225

dippers, bronze (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 234
Doha Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar
  Abu Ishaq Inju candlestick (14th c.) 90, 93
  basin with eagle and duck motif (13th c.) 41
  bowl inlaid with silver and gold (14th c.) *94*, 94–95
  candlestick (Husayn ibn Muhammad, 1257) *38*, 39, *39*, *40*
  candlestick with mounted warriors (Mosul, 1220s–30s) 33, 50, *51*, 52, 75*n*98, 80*n*139
  ivory box (1003–4) 312
  tray made for Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun 190–91, *191*, 192
dot patterns 248
Douglas-Hamilton, Mrs J.M.: bequest 116, 119
Duché Aimé: Paris shawl 196
Durri al-Saghir 305
Dust Muhammad 91, 95

Edinburgh *see* National Museums of Scotland
Ehsai, Mohammad 443, 450–51, 454
Elisabeth of Carinthia 201, 208
  basin 201–4, *202*, *204*, 205–7, 208–9
  coat of arms 201, 204, 205, *205*
Ellis, Alexander G. 175, 180–81
Ellis, Marianne 254
Elvira (Madinat Ilbira): lampstand 289, 290, 291–92
Emami, Karim 456*n*1
Embroiderers' Guild 253
embroideries, Egyptian (Ashmolean Museum) 253–62
  Ayyubid 260, Plate 11
  with blazon emblems (Mamluk) 257, Plate 10
  dating 258–59, 260
  geometric motifs 261
  naturalistic motifs 259–60
  samplers 261, Plate 12
  stitching techniques 256, 259, 260–62
embroidery, Damascene 267, 276–77
Engels, Peter 421
Estelle, Jean-Baptiste 318–19
Estienne, Charles 432
Ettinghausen, Richard 35, 43, 242
Euphemios of Traina 295
ewers
  by Abu Zayd (St Louis Art Museum) 397, 398–400, *399*, 401, 404–5, 406, Plate 24
  for Abu'l Qasim Mahmud ibn Sanjarshah 45, 76*nn*105,106
  by 'Ali ibn 'Abdallah 33, 75*n*96
  by 'Ali ibn Husayn (1275) *38*, 41
  Blacas ewer (Shuja' ibn Man'a, 1232) 12, 17, *19*, 19–20, 23, 30, *31*, 32, *34*, 41, 53, 54, 73*n*82, 76*n*106
  Damascene (1259) 28, 29
  by Dawud ibn Salama (1248) 33, *34*
  by al-Dhaki (1223; Cleveland Museum) 17, *18*, 30, *30*, 33, *34*, *36*, 54, 77*n*107
  by al-Dhaki ('Homberg', 1242; Keir Collection) 33, *34*, 71*n*49, 228
  Fatimid (from Tiberias) 224, 228–29, *229*, 237
  by Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Mawsili (1259) 13, 39, 43, *43*, 77*n*110
  by Ibn Jaldak (1226, Metropolitan) *34*, 70*n*39
  by Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya (1200–10, Louvre) *34*, 50, 52, 53
  pottery with guilloche pattern (5th/6th c.) 247, 76*nn*105, 106
  qingbai ware (V&A) 398
  by Yunus ibn Yusuf al-Mawsili (1246–47, Walters Art Museum) 26, 27, *31*, 33
eye diagrams ('modern palimpsests') 429–30, *430*, 436–37, Plate 28

Famensi temple (China): Islamic cobalt-blue glass dish 354, 359
farangi-sazi ('European style') 413, 416, 422–23
Fath 'Ali Shah (r.1801–34) 125
Fathi, Golnaz 455–56
Fatimids
  brass boxes from Caesarea 224, 226, 232, 239–50, 291
  bronze hoard from Tiberias 223–38, 242, 243, 248, 291
  bronze tambourine player 217–19, *219*, 220
  caliphs 149, 221
  embroidery 253, 258, 259–60
  female representations 217, 218
  ivory frame 217, *218*
  jewellery 235, 247, 248
  lustreware 217, 218, 379, 380–81, *381*, *382*, 383, 387, 393, 394, 395–96, Plate 9 *see also* lustreware; ceramics
Fattahzadeh, Vali 456
Fez (Morocco) 330
  Badi' palace spolia (in Dar al-Batha Museum) 321, 329
  Mausoleum of Mawlay Idris II 320, 328, *329*
  New Mosque (Mausoleum of Mawlay Idris II) 324, *324*, *325*, 325–26, 331
  Qarawiyyin mosque 320, 321, 322, 325, 329
  Rasif mosque 320, 323, *323*, 330, 331
  royal palace 330
Firdawsi: *Shahnama* 90, 91, 92, 93, 153*n*13, 165, 401
firearms *see* guns and gun-makers
Firuz Shah, tomb of 163
Firuzabad (Iran) 166
al-Fishtali, 'Abd al-'Aziz 317, 321
  Manahil al-safa'… 320, 332*n*1
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge: Mamluk inlaid brass casket 171–82, Plates 5, 6
flabella
  brass (Mosul) 49–50, *50*, 53–54
  feather 148–49
'flame' script 173, *174*
Flandin, Eugène and Coste, Pascal: *Voyage en Perse* 196
Flood, Finbarr Barry 151
flora and fauna *see* animal motifs *and specific animals*; bird shapes and motifs; flower and plant motifs
flower and plant motifs
  acanthus 227, 231, 324, *324*
  on Belitung metal items 355

on bronzes from Tiberias 227, 231, 232, 234, 235, 236
bud designs 246, 247, *247*
dates 354
on Fatimid embroidery 259
on Iraqi monochrome lustrewares 355
leaf scrolls 53, 227
Ottoman-Moroccan marble carving *326*, 327
Ottoman-Turkish marble carving *325*, 325–26
tendrils 144, 145, 246
vegetal motifs 248
flywhisks 147–51, 152
forehead bands, Fatimid 218
Fould, Louis: collection 69*n*6
foxes (motifs) 194, 227
Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC
Arenberg basin 92
Bal'ami's *Tarikhnama* 93
ewer (Qasim ibn 'Ali, 1232) 27–28, 33, 30, *30*, 33, 76*nn*105, 106
lustre-painted jar (Iraqi) 354, Plate 17
pen-case (Shadhi of Herat, 1210) 153*n*5
silver-inlaid canteen (13th c.) 46–49, *49*, 50, *50*, *51*, 52, 76*n*106
Fustat (Egypt) 218, 220, 255, 393, 395
'Hare' (from *Mantiq al-Wahsh*) *386*, 386–87
'Lion' (from *Mantiq al-Wahsh*) *385*, 385–86
shroud 259
textiles 255
trifoliate handle 248

Gamboa, Fernanda 374
Gawan, Mahmud, vizier 165
Gayraud, Roland-Pierre 255, 259
gazelles (motifs) 235, 400–2, *402*
Gazette des Beaux-Arts 13
Geniza documents 140, 242, 255
trousseau documents 242–43
geometric motifs
on bronzes from Tiberias 232, 234, 235–36
on embroidery (13th c.) 261
Gerona (Hisham's) casket 305, 307–8, *308*
Ghaznavids 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 145, 151
architecture 261
Ghazni (Afghanistan) 133, 134, 136, 151
metalworking industry 138
minaret of Mas'ud 136
palace of Mas'ud III 136
Ghurids 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 145, 151, 152
Glaze, Eliza 440*n*31
Collection (South Carolina): 'modern palimpsests' 428, 429–31, *430*, *431*
Goitein, S.D. 242, 255
Golconda (India) 165, 166
goldsmiths/goldworking, Damascene 265, 267, 276, 277
Golius, Jacob 321
plan of Badi' palace 321–22
Gongxian (China): ceramics 351, 352, *352*, 354, 357, *358*, 359
Gonzales de Clavijo, Ruy 265
Goury, Jules 195
Grabar, Oleg 26
Great Exhibition (London, 1851) 194, 195, 196
Grey, Abby 462–63
Grigorian, Marcos 459*n*29
Grube, Ernst 386
Guangzhou (China) 357
storage jars 351
Guevara, Jorge 366, 368
guilloche patterns 240, 247, 248, 286
Gulbarga (India)
Shah Bazar mosque 166
tombs 166
see also below
Gulbarga: Jami' Masjid (Friday Mosque) 155–67, Plate 4
guns and gun-makers, Damascene 267, 274, 275, 277
Guruh-i azad-i naqqashan va piykareh-sazan (Independent Group of Painters and Sculptors) 448

al-Hajj Isma'il 24, 72*n*60
candlestick (inlaid by Muhammad ibn Fattuh) 23, 37, *39*, 42, *42*, 43, *44*
al-Hakam II, caliph (r.961–76) 308
ivory pyxis 303, 305, 308–9, *309*, 310, 315*n*27
Hama (Syria): excavations 241
Hamadan (Iran) 127*n*17
Hamid ibn 'Abdallah ibn 'Abd al-Qadir: tray 192, *193*
Hammad al-Rawiyah 306, 308–9
Hangloo, R.L. 138–39
Harawi, Ahmad 95
hares (motifs) 227, 245–46, 380, *381*, *382*, 383–85, 386, *386*, 387–88, *388*
al-Hariri: *Maqamat* 432
al-Harith (ibn Bakr?) *see* 'Mujib'
Harsha, Kashmiri king (r.1063–89) 137–38, 139
Harun, ruler of Egypt (r.896–905) *258*
Harun al-Rashid, Abbasid caliph (r.786–809) 349, 350, 352
Hasan, Sultan (r.1347–51, 1354–61) 192
al-Hasan ibn 'Isun 26
Hasan ibn Muhammad 100–1
Hazavehi, Hadi 458*n*16
Hebei (China): stoneware 351
Henan (China): stoneware 351
Hendrix, Jan 373
'Naturaleza' 373, *373*
Henry of Castile 265
Herat (Afghanistan): metalworkers 53, 54, 76*n*105, 131, 132, 140
Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg
Bobrinsky bucket 76*n*105, 131, 153*n*5
candlestick for Badr al-Din Lu'lu' 24–25, *25*, 35, 37, 43, *43*, 45
pen-box (Khurasani) 131, 135
silver ewers (9th–11th c.) 228
Hernández, Sergio 371
Hewitt, James 180
Hewitt, Reverend Thomas 171, 180, 181
Hewitt, William 180
Hillenbrand, Robert 89, 307
Hindu images 133, 134, 135
hinges 241, 244, 245–46
al-Hira (Iraq): clay 337, 338, 344–45

Hirschfeld, Professor Yizhar 237*n*1, 241
Hisham II, caliph (r.976–*c*.1010) 307
Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik, Umayyad caliph (r.724–43) 306, 309
Hisn Kaifa-Amida 17
Hispanic Society pyxis 303, 305, *306*, 308, *308*, 311, 312, 316*n*41
Hoeltzer, Ernst 115, 126
Holkonda (India): tombs 166
Holum, Professor Kenneth 239
Hornachuelos (Spain): hoard of silver ingots 305
Horne, John 330
horses and horsemen (motifs) 46, *49*, 50, *51*, *92*, 92–93, *93*
Hosseini, Mansureh 442, 449–50
Höst, Georg 319
Hugh of Capua and Natale 295
*huqqa*s (pipes) 119–20, 122, 150, Plate 1
Husayn al-Hakim ibn Mas'ud 32, *35*
  jug (1239) 32, 33, *47*
Husayn ibn Ahmad ibn Husayn 42, 44, 57
Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Mawsili 37, 39, 43–44, 53
  candlestick (1257) *38*, 39, *39*, *40*, 41, 77*n*110
  ewer (1259) 13, 39, 43, *43*, 77*n*110

al-Ibari al-Isfahani: astrolabe 83*n*152
Ibn al-Azraq 52
Ibn Hayyan 304
Ibn Jaldak/Abu Bakr ibn al-Hajji Jaldak/'Umar ibn Hajji Jaldak 17, 30, 32, *35*, 45, 72*n*60
  candlestick (1225) 30, *31*, 33, *34*, 72*n*64, 75*n*98
  ewer (1225, Boston) *34*
  ewer (1226, Metropolitan) *34*, 70*n*39
Ibn Khaldun 306
Ibn Khallikan 28
Ibn al-Muqaffa': *Kalila and Dimna* 383–84
Ibn Sa'id 12, 14, 22
Ibn Shaddad 29
Ibn Shuhayd, vizier 306
Ibn al-Thumna 294
Ibrahim the Christian: unglazed bowl 337–38, *338*
Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya 24, 27, 32, 33, 35, *35*, 45, 56
  ewer (Louvre, c.1200–10) 33, *34*, 45, 50, 52, 53, 54
  ewer for Abu'l Qasim Mahmud ibn Sanjarshah 45, 76*nn*105,106
al-Idrisi 294, 296
al-Ifrani, Muhammad al-Saghir 318, 319, 327, 331, 332*nn*1,16
Ilkhanids 55, 89
  basin 77*n*110
  manuscripts 90, 91
Imi N'Tala (Morocco): Sa'dian remains 333*n*29
incense-burners
  bronze (from Tiberias) 227, *228*, *230*
  with octagon motif (British Museum, 1242) 31, *31*
  for Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun 15, 76*n*105
incense plates, bronze (from Tiberias) 231
India 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136
  flywhisks 149–50
  textiles 253
  see also Kashmir; Mughals
Informalism 459*n*25
Inju, Fadlallah, vizier 165
inlaid metalwork
  1200–1325 22, 37, 58–66
  Byzantium/Constantinople doors 84*n*156
  from Cairo 23, 37, 39
  Damascene 23, 28, 37
  Kashmiri 132–35
  Khurasani 131–34, 135
  Mosul 11–16, 22, 23, 46–50, 52–55, 67–68
  Persian 90, *90*, 92, *92*, 93
  Qajar 122
inscriptions
  'flame' 173, *174*
  'knotted Kufic' *38*, 39, *39*, 75*n*98, 77*n*110
  Mamluk 172, 173, *174*, 174–78, *175*, *178*, 188–89
  see also calligraphy; Kufic script
interlace designs 240, 241
iron and steel artefacts, Damascene 266, 267, 273–76
Isfahan 413, 415, 420
  Chihil Sutun palace murals 416–17, *418*, 425*n*22
  copper vessels 267, *268*
  jami' 165
  see also New Julfa; Qajar metalwork
Isma'il, Sultan (r.1672–1727) 318–20, 328–29, 330
  tomb, Meknes *326*, 327
Isma'il ibn Ahmad, Amir 102
Isma'il ibn Ahmad al-Wasiti: jug made for *31*
Isma'il ibn Muhammad, Sultan (r.1342–45): tray made for 192, *193*
Isma'il ibn Ward ibn 'Abdallah al-Naqqash al-Mawsili 24, 27, 45, 53, 72*n*60
  boxes 24, 33, 56–57
Israel 241, *see* Jerusalem; Ramla; Tiberias
Italian Renaissance marble carving 322, *324*, 324–25, 327, 328, 330, 331
al-'Itaqi, Shams al-Din: anatomical treatise 431–32
ivories
  al-Andalus caskets/pyxides 247, 301–13
  Fatimid frame/plaques (Berlin Museum) 217, *218*
  plaque (V&A) 302
Iyas 32
Iznik pottery 326, 345*n*5, 360
'Izz al-Din ibn al-Athir 28

Jabbari, Sedaghat 454–55
  The Melody of the Rain 455, Plate 31
Jabbehdar, 'Ali Quli 422
Jabir ibn Hayyan 465
Jahangir, Mughal emperor (r.1605–27) 150, 414
al-Jahiz 149, 344
  Kitab al-hayawan 385, 387
Jalayir, Sultan Ahmad 90
Jalayirids 90, 91, 93
Jamal al-Din ibn Hisham 435
Jami 165
Jami' al-tawarikh (Rashid al Din) 93, *93*, 94

Jawdhar 305
Jazira, the 52, 53, 54, 92
Jenkins, Marilyn 245, 246
Jerusalem
  aqueduct 190
  L.A. Memorial Institute basin 203
Jesuits 414, 422
jewellers/jewellery
  Damascene 267, 276, 277
  Fatimid 235, 247
Jews
  copper engravers 272, 277
  goldsmiths 140
John of Aversa 295
John of Mardin, Bishop 82*n*144
John of Qartmin, Bishop 81*n*142
Jones, Owen 195, 196, 197, 198
  The Grammar of Ornament 195–96
Josz, Virgile 13
Jowdat, Mohammad Reza 458*n*16
jugs
  bronze (from Tiberias) 224
  glaze-decorated (Louvre) 342–43, Plate 15
  by Husayn al-Hakim ibn Mas'ud (1239) 32, 33, *47*
  lustre-painted (Khalili Collection, 13th c.) 408*n*26, 409*n*38
  with octagon motif (made for Isma'il ibn Ahmad al-Wasiti) *31*
  see also ewers
Julfa 413, *see* New Julfa
Jurji, Amir 173, 174, 175

Ka'b al-Ahbar: *Book on the Speech of Wild Animals* 385, 386–87
Kairouan (Tunisia), Great Mosque 156, 322, 323
Kalantari, Parviz 457*n*4
Kalasha, Kashmiri king 137, 138
Kalhana: *Rajatarangini* (*Sea of Kings*) 136–40
*kalian*s (Qajar water pipes) 126, Plate 2
Kalila wa Dimna stories 383–84, 387, Plate 20
Kamal al-Din ibn Yunus ibn Man'a 83*n*150
Kamal ibn Man'a 72*n*62
Kaoukji, Sue 380
Karami, Alireza 456
kaseh-ye chasham (sweet bowl) 242
Kashan (Iran)
  brass tray (NMS) 122
  ceramics 12, 24, 57, 69*n*5, 339, 343, 396
  copperware (NMS) 124
Kashmir 137
  metalwork/metalworkers 132–35, 136–38, 139
  paintings 137
  Sanskrit chronicle 136–37
Keir Collection, London
  candlestick 46, 80*n*138
  'Homberg' ewer (al-Dhaki, 1242) 33, *34*, 71*n*49, 228
Khalili Collection, London
  candlestick with octagon motif *31*, 75*n*98, 80*n*138
  lustre-painted bowl (contemporary) 401–2, 403
  lustre-painted jug (13th c.) 408*n*26, 409*n*38
  Mughal miniature 150
Khamis, Elias 241, 243, 249, 297*n*6
Khamsa (Nizami) 94–95, *95*, 233
Khan, Mirza Husain: *Jughrafiya-yi Isfahan* 119
Khatun Khawanrah, Princess 26
Khirbat al-Mafjar (Palestine): floor mosaic 383
Khirbat Minya (Israel) 242
Khitrovo, Bogdan 421
Khurasan (Iran) 102, 349
  inlaid metalwork 131–34, 135
  mint 101
  silversmiths 52–53
  tubular bronze object 143–52
Khwaju Kirmani: *masnawi*s 90–91, *91*, 93, 94
Khwarazmians 29
Kiani, Asadollah 456
*kilga*s, Fatimid marble 217
al-Kindi, Ya'qub ibn Ishaq: *On Swords…* 274
Kitab al-Aghani 45, 46, *46*, *47*, 80*n*138, 149
Kitab al-Diryaq (*Book of Antidotes*) 45, 225
al-Kittani 328
Koechlin, Raymond 340
Komaroff, Linda 89–90, 92, 93
Kratchkovskaya, V.A. 26
Kremlin, Moscow
  Armoury 421
  Church of the Crucifixion
    Ascension 419, 422
    St John the Theologian 422
Kubiak, W. 255
Kufic script 444, 450, 453
  on Andalusi pillar lampstands 289
  on bronze box (12th c. Egyptian) 233
  on bronzes from Tiberias 230, 231, *232*, 233, 234, 235
  foliated script 135–36
  knotted Kufic inscriptions *38*, 39, *39*, 75*n*98, 77*n*110
  on Petralia lampstand 285, 292, *293*
  on pottery 340
  see also inscriptions
Kühnel, Ernst 15, 32

Ladakh (Himalayas) 137, 139
ladles (from Caesarea) 245, 247
Lajin, Sultan (r.1296–99): *mihrab* candlestick 39, *40*, 79*n*121
lamp-fillers, bronze (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 227
lamps, bronze (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 226, 227
lampstands
  with birds (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto) 289–90
  bronze (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 225, *225*
  from Caesarea hoard 247, *247*
  from Elvira (Madinat Ilbira) 289, 290, 291–92
  fragments, with zoomorphic ornament 289–90
  with openwork tray (David Collection) 289, 290
  Petralia 283–89, *284–88*, 290–99, *293*
Lanci, Michelangelo 12, 69*n*6, 72*n*65
Lane-Poole, Stanley 13, 189, 192
lanterns/lantern-makers
  Antioch 272, *273*
  Damascene 267, 272, 278
  Qajar copper and wax cloth 118, *118*, 124
Lavoix, Henri 12–13
Łazaryan, Manya 415
Lazcarro, José 370

Lebanon: bell-casting 270, *270*
lectionaries, Syriac 47–48, 49
Leeds, E.T. 254
Leeds University: textiles 253
Lepanto, Battle of (1571) 326
'letterism'/lettristes/Lettriste movement 441, 457*n*3, 458*n*22, 459*n*23
lighting devices
  bronze (from Tiberias) 224, *225*, 225–27
  see also lamps; lampstands; lanterns
lions (motifs) 380, *391*, *382*, 383–86, *385*, 387–88, *388*
  on Petralia lampstand 284, 285, *285*, 286, 287, 291
locks and keys, bronze (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 235
locksmiths, Damascene 267, 276
Loputskii, Stanislav 421
Los Angeles County Museum of Art: *mina'i* bowl (Abu Zayd) 404
Louvre Museum, Paris
  Baptistère de Saint Louis 15, 42, 230
  Barberini vase 15, 29, 74*n*87, 78*n*120
  basin ('Ali ibn Husayn ibn Muhammad, 1285) 39, 41, 42, *42*
  basin (al-Dhaki, 1238–40) 17, *18*, 19, *19*, 20, 27, 32, *36*, 92
  basin (for Hughes de Lusignan) 202, 208
  candlestick (Dawud bin Salama, 1248) *31*, 31–32, 33, *34*, *36*, 75*n*97
  candlestick (Mosul) 25, *26*
  ewer (?'Ali ibn Husayn ibn Muhammad) *38*
  ewer (Ibraham ibn Mawaliya) *34*, 50, 52, 53
  glaze-decorated jug, with tall narrow neck 342–43, Plate 15
  lustre-painted lion and hare bowl (Abbasid) 387–88, *388*
  pen-box with octagon motif (Abu'l Qasim bin Sa'd ibn Muhammad) *31*
  plate with Lusignan coats of arms *206*, 206–7
Lusignan, Hughes de: basin made for 202, 208
Lusignan family coats of arms, plate with *206*, 206–7
lustreware
  Abbasid 380, 387–88, *388*
  Basran 341, 354–56, 359, Plate 17
  bowl with cheetah (contemporary, Khalili Collection) 401–2, 403
  bowl with palmette patterns (Egyptian, British Museum) 245, 246
  cup with cheetah (Plotnick Collection, 1197–98) *402*, 402–3
  ewer (Abu Zayd) 397, 398–400, *399*, 401, 404–5, 406
  Fatimid 217, 218, 379, 380–81, *381*, *382*, 383, 387, 393, 394, 395–96, Plate 9
  jug (Khalili Collection, 13th c.) 408*n*26, 409*n*38
  Kashan 396
Lyautey, General Louis 330
Lyon: Musée des Beaux Arts
  candlestick (in name of al-Muzaffar Yusuf I) 41
  inlaid brass bowl (1347–48) *92*, 92–93
Lyrical Abstraction 459*n*25

Macharias: *Liber de oculis* 436–37
Madinat al-Zahra' (Córdoba) 304, 305
  Elvira lampstand 289, 290, 291–92
  fountain 301–2
  silver perfume bottles 305–6, *307*
Madrid: Museo Arqueológico Nacional
  lampstand 290
  Palencia casket 313, 316*n*42
Mafi, Reza 443, 451–52
Maghribi-Andalusi marble carving 321, 322, *323*, 323–24, 330
Mahallati, Mohammad 458*n*16
al-Mahdi, Abbasid caliph: daughter of 218
Mahmud ibn Muhammad *al-katib* 94
Malär, Lake (Sweden): Viking site 134
Malek, Sirus 458*n*16
al-Malik al-'Adil II, Ayyubid ruler: al-Dhaki basin dedicated to 17, 27, 71*n*49
al-Malik al-'Aziz, Ayyubid sultan (r.1231–33) 245
  box inscribed in name of 74*n*86
al-Malik 'Aziz Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad, Sultan of Aleppo (r.1216–37) 27, 28
al-Malik al-Kamil, ruler of Egypt 29
al-Malik al-Mas'ud, Sultan of Yemen (1215–28/9) 16–17
al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad Hizabr al-Din Dawud ibn Yusuf, Rasulid sultan (r.1296–1321) 44
al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf I, Rasulid sultan (r.1250–95) 41, 77*n*110
al-Malik al-Nasir Muhammad/Nasir al-Din Muhammad/Nasir al-Dunya wa'l-Din (r.1293–94, 1299–1309, 1310–41) 189–90, 203
al-Malik al-Nasir II Salah al-Din Yusuf, Sultan of Aleppo (r.1237–60) 28, 29, 77*n*110
al-Malik al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub 29
Malik, Yahya 431, 432, 437
Mambeigi, Fereydoon 455
'Mamluk revival' metalwork 271
Mamluks 22, 37, 261, 319
  basin of Elisabeth of Carinthia (Rijksmuseum) 201–9, *202*, *204*, *205*, *206*
  basins (1250–1382) 203, 209–10, 230
  candlesticks 42, 226
  embroidery (Ashmolean) 253, *256*, 257, *257*, 258, 259, 261–62, Plate 10
  metalwork 15, 39, 41, 237, 265
  parasols 149
  tankard (British Museum) 172, 173
  tray (V&A) 187, *188*, 188–90, 191, 192–94, 197, 198, Plates 7, 8
al-Ma'mun, Abbasid caliph 100
al-Mansur, Abbasid caliph (754–75) 337–38
al-Mansur al-Dhahbi, Sultan Ahmad (r.1578–1603) 317–18, 319, 320, 322, 325, 326, 327, 329, 330, 331
  tomb chamber, Marrakesh 321

al-Mansur ibn Abi 'Amir 305
Mansur ibn Ilyas: *Tashrih-i Mansuri* (*Mansur's Anatomy*) 430, 431, 432, 436
al-Mansur Muhammad, Sultan 173
al-Mansur Nur al-Din, Mamluk sultan (r.1257–59) 41
Mansura (Egypt): bronze door-knockers 135–36
Mantiq al-Wahsh *385*, *386*, 385–87
manuscripts
'Aja'ib-nama (Tusi Salami) 95
Jami' al-tawarikh (Rashid al-Din) 90, 93, *93*, 94
Khamsa (Nizami) 94–95, *95*, 233
Marzubannama 91
*masnawi*s of Khwaju Kirmani 90–91, *91*, 93, 94
Rajatarangini (*Sea of Kings*) (Kalhana) 136–40
Shahnama (Firdawsi) 90, 91, 92, 93, 153*n*13, 165, 401
al-Maqrizi 29, 177, 178, 221
Mar Mattai, Monastery of: lectionary 48, 49
Marçais, Georges 321, 325, 327
Marinid architecture 321–22, 323
Marrakesh 320, 331
Badi' palace spolia 325, 328, 329
Dar al-Badi mosque and madrasa 320
Ibn Yusuf Madrasa 322, 333*n*35
Marinid madrasa of Abu'l-Hasan 319
Mausoleum of Sidi Ahmad al-Susi 329
Mausoleum of Sidi Yusuf ibn 'Ali 333*n*35
Mawasin mosque 333*n*35
palace of Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah 320, 330–31
qasba 321
Sa'dian tombs 321
Marwan II, Umayyad caliph (r.744–50) 228
Marzubannama 91
Mashad (Iran) 124, 127*n*17
Massalski 275
Mas'ud, Ghaznavid sultan 134
Mauldin, Barbara: *Cerámica y Cultura* 366
Mayer, Leo A. 25
Saracenic Heraldry 171, 175, 176
Maymun (*qa'id*) 295
medallions (motifs) 17, *18*, *19*, 19–20, *36*, 42, 204, 231
Medici, Francesco de 318
Mehmet II, Sultan (r.1444–46, 1451–81) 165, 414
Meinecke, Michael 337–38
Meisami, Julie Scott 403
Meknes (Morocco)
'Alawi palace 330
Bab al-Eulj 319
Badi' palace spolia 318, 319–20, 327
Dar al-Baida palace 320, 330
Dar al-Madrasa 327
mosque of the Qasr al-Mhansha (Palace of the Labyrinth) 327
palace of Sultan Isma'il 318–20, 320, 330–31
tomb of Sultan Isma'il *326*, 327
Melikian-Chirvani, A.S. 11, 76*n*106, 90, 116
Melkonian, Sirak 459*n*29
merlons (on lampstands) 291–92
Mesqali, Farshid 458*n*16
Metropolitan Museum, New York
candlestick (Mosul, 1230s) 32, *36*, 45–46, *46*, *47*, 75*n*98, 77*n*107
Damascus Room 178, *179*
ewer (Ibn Jaldak, 1226) *34*, 70*n*39
mina'i bowl (Abu Zayd) 405
tray for al-Malik al-Muzaffar Yusuf I 41
Mexico City: Franz Mayer Museum 371, *372*, 374
Migeon, Gaston 13, 14, *14*, 20
mina'i technique 339, 343, 379
bowls (Abu Zayd) 404, 405
Minas (artist) 417, 420, 422, 423
Minasean, Levon: *firmans* 420
Mirjan al-Sultani, vizier 84*n*157
mirror frames, Damascene 267
Mocquet, Jean 322
'modern palimpsests' 427–37
Momayyez, Morteza 459*n*29
Mongols 29, 37, 54, 55
Shahnama 90, 91, 92, 93
Montaigne, Michel de 318, 324
Montalvo, Germán 370, 371
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts: Mosul basin 29
'moon figure' (motif) 15, 32, *35*, 77*n*106, 85*n*168
*morachhal*s (flywhisks) 150–51, 152
Morales, Rudolfo: 'Las mujeres de mi pueblo' plate 373, Plate 19
Moreno, Angélica 368, 370, 371, 373
Morier, James Justinian 124
mortars 267; *see* pestles and mortars
Moshe ben Asher: *Codex of the Prophets* 246
Moshiri, Farhad 456
mosque lamps, bronze (from Tiberias) 224, 226
mosques
Bidar (Solah Khamba) 165, 166, *166*
Cairo (al-Hakim) 156, 247
Córdoba (Great Mosque) 161, 322, 323
Delhi (Kalan and Khirki) 159–60
Fez 320, 323, *323*, 330, 331 (Rasif); 320, 321, 322, 325, 329 (Qarawiyyin); 324, *324*, *325*, 325–26, 331 (New)
Gulbarga 155–67 (*Jami'*; Friday Mosque), 166 (Shah Bazar)
Kairouan (Great Mosque) 322, 323
Marrakesh 320 (Dar al-Badi); 333*n*35 (Mawasin)
Mossadeg, Mohammed 461
Mosul (Iraq) 15, 52, 54, 81*n*139, 85*n*168
Church of the Virgin sculpture 49
painting 32, 45, *46*, *47*, 54, 80*n*138, 149
'school of metalwork' 11–85
Mouritzë, William de 295
mu'aliqi script 453
Mughals 152
paintings 150, 151, 414, Plate 3
al-Mughira pyxis 303, 305
Muhammad I, Bahmani king (r.1358–75) 155
Muhammad al-Nasiri, Sidi 175–76
Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah, Sultan (r.1757–90) 320, 330
Muhammad ibn Ahmad: *Kalila wa Dimna* 389*n*13

Muhammad ibn Fattuh 23–24, *35*, 43–44, 54, 75*n*99
candlestick (with al-Hajj Isma'il) 23, 37, *39*, 42, *42*, 43, *44*, 76*n*106
candlestick (in British Museum) 45
Muhammad ibn Hasan 37
candlestick 41
silver-inlaid candlestick 39
Muhammad ibn 'Isun 25–26
Muhammad ibn Khutlukh al-Mawsili 32, 44, 53, 54
geomantic table 27, 53, 71*n*58, 75*n*100
incense-burner 53, 71*n*58, 75*n*100
Muhammad ibn Katbugha 183*n*21, 184*n*23
Muhammad ibn Qalawun, Sultan
incense-burner made for 15, 76*n*105
tray made for 189–91, *191*, 192
Muhammad ibn Tahir 134
Muhammad ibn Tughluq 163
muhaqqaq script 444
'Mujib' (al-Harith (ibn Bakr?))/ Balkh engraver 101, 102, 110, *see* Balkh
Munich Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde: tray (for Badr al-Din Lu'lu') 17, *18*, 19, 25–26, 28, 30, *31*, 32, 41
al-Muqaddasi 52, 294
muqarnas arches 321, 328–29, *329*
al-Muqtadir, caliph (r.908–32) 259
Murad III, Sultan 433
Murad IV, Sultan 431
Murdoch, John: *Album of Science* 437
Musa ibn Abi al-'Afiyya 304
al-Mustansir, Fatimid caliph (r.1036–94) 219, 220
al-Musta'sim, caliph of Baghdad 55
al-Mu'tadid bi'llah, caliph (r.892–902) *258*
al-Mu'tamid, caliph of Baghdad 134
al-Mu'tasim, caliph (r.833–42) 274
al-Muzaffar, 'Afif, ruler of Hamah 16, 17
al-Muzaffar Baybars, Sultan 221
al-Muzaffar Hajji, Sultan (r.1346–47) 176
al-Muzaffar Sayf al-Din Qutuz, Mamluk sultan (r.1259–60) 41

Nadal, Jerome: *Evangelicae historiae imagines* 422, 417
Najm al-Din Ayyub, Sultan 92
Najm al-Din al-Badri: bowl for 24, 28
Nami, Gholamhossein 442, 450, 459*n*29
naqqash (copper engraver) 267, *271*, 271–72
Naqqashi-khatt artists: neo-calligraphy 441–42, 443, 444, 449, 450–54, 455, 456
Narbonne Cathedral: pyxis 312
narghiles: brass heads 266–67
Nasab (singer) 220
al-Nasir Hasan, Sultan (d.1361) 174, 175, 177, 178
al-Nasir Muhammad, Sultan (r.1294–1340) 174, 176, 177–78, 179, 221
al-Nasir Yusuf 28, 74*n*88
Nasrid architecture 321–22, 323
nasta'liq script 444, 445, 447, 450, 451, 453, 454, 464
National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh: Qajar metalwork 115–26, Plates 1, 2
needles and needle-makers, Damascene 267, 275–76
Negarandeh, Rafat 455
neo-calligraphy 441–43
Naqqashi-khatt artists 441–42, 443, 444, 449, 450–54, 455, 456
Saqqa-khaneh School 441, 442, 443–44, 446, 447, 449, 450, 453, 454, 455, 463
Neshat, Shirin 460*n*40
Newberry, Essie 253, 254–55
Newberry, Professor Percy 253, 254–55, 259
Newberry Collection of embroideries (Ashmolean Museum) 253–63
New Julfa (Isfahan) 115, 413, 414, 415, 420
Holy Bethlehem church 414, 416–17, 420, 423
The Adulteress (mural) *418*, 425*n*22
Ascension (mural) *419*, 422
Nicolaus (*strategot*) 295
niello decoration 308, 309–10
Nizami: *Khamsa* 94–95, *95*, 233
NMS *see* National Museums of Scotland
al-Nu'aymi 265
nuhas (copper/copper alloys) 266
nuhas asfar (brass) 266

octagon (motif) 30–32, *31*, 33, *35*, 50, 53
oil lamps, bronze (from Tiberias) 224, 227
Olmer (scientist) 121, 122
Orellana, Margarita de 374
Oskanyan, Vazgen 415
Osman, Hajj 393
Ottoman-Moroccan marble carving 322, *326*, 327, 328, *329*
Ottoman-Turkish marble carving 322, 323, *325*, 325–26, 330, 331

padlock plates, bronze (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 235
painters/paintings
Chihil Sutun palace (Isfahan) murals 416–17, *418*
Mosul 32, 45, *46*, *47*, 54, 80*n*138, 149
Mughal 149, 150, 151, 414, Plate 3
New Julfan 413–14, 416–17, *418*, *419*, 420, *see* Astuacatur
Persian 89–96, *91*, *93*, *95*
Rajput 151
see also manuscripts; 'modern palimpsests'
Pakbaz, Ruyin 450, 451–52, 458*n*16
Pal, Pratapaditya 132, 138
Palencia casket 313, 316*n*42
Palermo (Sicily)
Cappella Palatina paintings 149
tray (1320s) 192
'palimpsests, modern' 427–37
palmettes (motifs) 173, 231, 240, 241, 245, 246, *306*, 311
half-palmettes 247
Palou Gracia, Pedro Ángel 373
Pamplona casket 303, 305, 307, 312
Panjhir mines (Afghanistan) 101, 102

parasols 149, 150, 151
Paris
  Palais Marsan exhibition (1903) 13, *14*
  see also Louvre Museum
Patrich, Professor Joseph 239
peacock-feather flywhisks 147, 148, 150–51
Pelayo, San: relic 311
pen-boxes
  by Abu'l Qasim bin Sa'd bin Muhammad *31*
  by 'Ali ibn Yahya 32, 32
  as blazons (Mamluk) 173, 174, 177–78, 183*n*13, 184*n*23
  Khurasan (Hermitage, 1148) 131, 135
  made for Sultan al-Mansur Muhammad (1363) 173
perfume bottles, silver (from Madinat al-Zahra') 305–6, *307*
Périllié, Jean 318
Persepolis: reliefs 147, *148*
pestles and mortars, bronze (from Tiberias) 225, *230*, 234
Peter II of Aragon, king of Sicily 201, 204, 208
Petralia, Samson de (notary) 295
Petralia Sottana, Sicily 294–96
  lampstand 283–89, *284–88*, 290–93, *293*, 294, 296
  St Michael Archangel (monastery) 295
Pilaram, Faramarz 443, 447–48, 458*n*16, 459*nn*29,35, 462
  Untitled 448, *448*
Pinder-Wilson, Ralph 245, 246
Piot, Eugène 69*n*6
Pipus (bailiff) 295
plant motifs *see* flower and plant motifs
Plotnick (Harvey B.) Collection, Chicago: lustre-painted cup *402*, 402–3
Polizzi (Sicily) 294, 295
Pontilla, Jean 393
Preece, John Richard 125
'principle of parsimony'/Occam's Razor 22
pseudo-script *see* calligraphy
Puebla (Mexico): tin-glaze ceramics 363–67
Pugin, A.W.N. 195, 197
pyxides, Andalusi ivory 302–3
  al-Mughira 303, 305
  Braga 303
  in David Collection 312
  al-Hakam 303, 305, 308–9, *309*, 310, 315*n*27
  Hispanic Society 303, 305, *306*, 308, *308*, 311, 312, 316*n*41
  in Narbonne Cathedral 312
  Zamora 303, 305, *308*, 308–9, 310, 311, 315*n*27
  Ziyad 303

al-Qahira *see* Cairo
Qahveh-khaneh ('coffee-house') painting 453
al-Qa'im bi Amr Allah, caliph (Abbasid) 220
Qajar metalwork (NMS) 115, 123–24
  brassware 119, *121*, 121–22, 125–26
  candlesticks 122, *123*, 125
  copper cockerel 116
  copper and wax cloth Chinese lantern 118, *118*, 124
  copperware 118–19, 122, 123, 124
  decorative techniques 120–22, 123
  enamelling 121, 122
  *huqqa*s 119–20, Plate 1
  kalian (water pipe) 126, Plate 2
  lidded urns 122, 126
  repoussé brass plaques 116, *116*, 120
  scientific and technological assessment 116, 117–22
  small boxes and containers 119
Qal'a Bani Hammad museum (Algeria): bronze bird 291, 293
Qalawun, Sultan (r.1280–90): tray dedicated to 41
al-Qalqashandi: *Daybreak for the Sufferer of Night-blindness in Composing Official Documents* 207
Qāmūs al-ṣinā'āt al-Shāmiyya (*Dictionary of the Damascene Crafts*) 266–68, 270–71, 272–78
Qandriz, Mansur 458*n*16
Qartmin, Monastery of *49*, 81*n*142
qasida 403
Qasim ibn 'Ali 24, *27*, *35*
  ewer 27–28, 30, *30*, 33, 76*nn*105,106
Qasimi, Jamal al-Din, al-Qasimi, Muhammad Sa'id, and al-'Azm, Khalil: *Qamus…* (*q.v.*) 266
Qatar: Museum of Islamic Art *see* Doha
Qaysar ibn Abi'l Qasim 83*n*150
qingbai ware ewer (in V&A) 398
Qulunjaq, Amir (1264–77): tray made for 41
Qusayr 'Amra: wall painting 148–49
Qustul (Egypt): box hinges 244

Raban, Professor Avner 239
Raby, Julian 379
Rafi' ibn Shams ibn Mansur 160
Rajatarangini (*Sea of Kings*) (Kalhana) 136–40
Ramla (Israel): excavations 241, 242
Raoul de Beauvais 295
Raqqa (Syria) 337, 338
  unglazed bowl fragment 337–38, *338*, 339, 344–45
al-Ra's, 'Abd al-Muhibb 430, 432
Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa 149
Rashid, Sultan (r.1666–72) 318
Rashid al-Din: *Jami' al-tawarikh* 90, 93, *93*, 94
Rashid al-Din ibn Shahrashub 261
Rasouli, Jalil 454
Rasulids of Yemen 17
  metalwork made for 15, *21*, 22, 41, 44, 190
Ravenna: clock-tower bell 207
Redgrave, Richard 195, 196, 197, 198
Reinaud, Joseph Toussaint 12
Reza Shah, Mohammad (r.1941–79) 445
Rice, David Storm 15–17, 19–20, 21, 22, 25, 32, 35, 45, 53
Riefstahl, Meyer 342
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam: Mamluk basin (of Elisabeth of Carinthia) 201–9
'Riza, Master' 420
Robinson, John Charles 197–98
Rocco, Monsignor Benedetto 288–89

Roger I, Count of Sicily 294, 295
Roger II, king of Sicily 295
  gold embroidered mantle 260
Roja, Vicente 371
Roman artefacts 225, 244, 245
Romanovs 413, 414, 420–21, 422, 423
  Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich 420, 421, 423
  Fedor Aleseevich 422
Rosen-Ayalon, Myriam 241–42
rosettes, relief 33, *34*, *35*, 172, *172*
Ruy Sánchez, Alberto 374

al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait 380, *381*
Sabunji-oghlu, Sharaf al-Din: surgical treatise 436
Sadeghzadeh, Einoddin 456
Sa'dian architecture and carving *see* Badi' palace
el-Sadr, Said 393–94, 395
  bowl, with girls with garlands Plate 21
  Medinat al-Fukhar (*Town of the Potters*) 394
  pots, with Fatimid images 394, 395–96, *395*, Plate 22
  turquoise dish 394–95, Plate 23
Safavids 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 420
  Attendants and Outdoor Feast 422
  Caucasian Royal Archer 422
Saffarids 102, 134
  coinage 100, 101
Safi (Morocco) 318
  marble spolia from Badi' palace 319, 331
al-Sahl al-Naisaburi: astrolabe 83*n*150
Saint Louis Art Museum: Abu Zayd ewer 397, 398–400, *399*, 401, 404–5, 406, Plate 24
Salah al-Din/Saladin, Sultan 222*n*10, 255
Saltanov, Bogdan/Ivan Ievlevich *see* Astuacatur
Samanids
  ceramics 379, 380, 406
  coinage/mints 99–100, 101, 102, 106, 107, 110, 111
Samarqand 265
  coinage/mint 100, 102, 109
Samarra (Iraq): Abbasid glaze-decorated sherds 340, 347*n*27, Plates 13, 14
al-Sanawbari: *Kitab al-Rahmah fi al-tibb wa-al-hikmah* 428
Sangram Singh, *maharana* of Mewar 150
Santarém (Portugal): Museu Arqueológico: lampstand fragment 290
Saqqa-khaneh School: neo-calligraphy 441, 442, 443–44, 446, 447, 449, 450, 453, 454, 455, 463
Sarre, Friedrich 13, 14, 340
  Die Keramik von Samarra 340
Sasanian sweet-meat dishes 242
Scanlon, George 255
Scarce, Jennifer 116
Scerrato, Umberto 287–89, 290
Schimmel, Anne-Marie 442
scientific instruments
  Syrian 53
  see also astrolabes
Scileppi, Don Santo 297*n*1
Seacombe Mill company 120
seal rings, Damascene 267, 270–71, 276
Sefrou (Morocco)
  Badi' spolia 331
  Great Mosque 334*n*60
Selim, Ottoman sultan 319
Seljuks 220, 221
  art and architecture 217, 261, 291
  of Rum 28
Sepehri, Sohrab 452
Serçe Limani, Turkey: bronze hoard 224, 242, 245
Sesma, Raymundo: basin 371, Plate 18
Sha'ban, Sultan (r.1345–46) 192
shadd al-jabin (forehead band) 218
Shahanshahnama (*Book of the King of Kings*) 433
Shahnama (Firdawsi) 90, 91, 92, 93, 153*n*13, 165, 401
Shahrimanean, Sarhad 421
Shahrimanean, Zacharia (Zak'ar Sahrimanean) 420–21
Shahroudi, Esmail 457*n*4
Shams al-Din (painter) 95–96
Shams al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman 55
Sharaf (coppersmith) 25, 26
al-Shash: coinage/mint 102, 109
Shihab al-Din Ghazi of Mayafariqin 17
Shihab al-Din Tughril 27, 28
  ewer 27, 28
shikasteh script 444, 447, 450, 453, 455, 462
Shiraz (Iran): metalwork 126, 268, *269*
Shiva, Qobad 458*n*16
Shuja' ibn Man'a al-Mawsili 23, 24, 32, *35*, 42, 83*n*150
Sibt ibn al-Jawzi 29
Sicily 294, 295
  ivory caskets 313
  see also Petralia Sottana
Siddh Sen, Raja 151
Siirt (Turkey) 53
Silos casket 313, 316*n*42
silverware/silverworking
  coinage 100, 101
  Damascene embroidery 267, 276–77
  Fatimid bracelets 247
  inlay *see* inlaid metalwork
  octagonal dish (Berlin Museum) 114*n*15
  perfume bottles (from Madinat al-Zahra') 305–6, *307*
Sind (India): metalwork 135
al-Siraj al-Dimashqi: astrolabe 83*nn*150, 152
Siryaqus (Egypt) 221
Sistan (Iran) 134
Siyah-mashq (calligraphy) 443, 446, 448, 453
Smith, John: *The True Travels… 318*
Smith, Robert Murdoch 115
Sobernheim, Moritz 25
Society of Iranian Calligraphers 445, 452, 453
soda-ash containers 242, 243
Soudavar, Abolala 422
Soustiel, Jean: photograph of lion and hare lustre bowl 380–81, *382*, 384
squatting woman ('modern palimpsest') 430–31, *431*
steel *see* iron and steel artefacts
stirrups, bronze (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 225, 235
Subh (concubine) 305, 308, 309
Sufis 94, 150, 151, 152
Sulayman, Amir 337, 344–45

Sulayman, Shah (r.1666–94) 415–16, 420, 421, 422
Sulayman, Sultan (r.1792–1822) 330–31, 334*n*60
Surmeyan, Archbishop Artavazd 417
Surrealism 459*n*25
Susa (Iran): Abbasid glaze-decorated wares 340, *341*
Swat Valley (Pakistan) 135
sweet-meat dishes, earthenware 241–42
swords and sword-makers
  Damascene 267, 273–75
  quillons (Fatimid: from Tiberias) 235
Symington-Grieve, J.: bequest 115–16
Syria 14
  scientific instruments 53
  see also Damascus

T-fret pattern, double 41, 75*n*98
Tabriz (Iran) 124, 165
Tabrizi, Sadeq 449, 458*n*16
Tachism 459*n*25
Tahirids of Khurasan 134
Taifa kings of Toledo: ivories 312
Taj al-Din Abu Durr Badr 77*n*110
Takht-i Sulayman (Iran): Ilkhanid palace tiles 404
'Talavera' tin-glaze ceramics 363–68, 374
Talavera de la Reyna, Cholula (Mexico) 368, 370, 375
  ceramics 368, *369*, 370–71, *372*, 373, Plates 18, 19
Talavera Santa Catarina, Cholula (Mexico) 374, 375
Tamari, Vera 344
tambourine player, bronze (Fatimid) 217–19, *219*, 220
al-Tamgruti (ambassador) 326
Tanavoli, Parviz 443, 444, 447, 462, 463
  Poet and the Cypress Tree 447, *448*
  Walls of Iran series 447
Tang dynasty (China)
  bronze mirrors 355
  ceramics 349, 350, 359, 360
tankard, Mamluk (British Museum) 172, 173
Tanri veran *see* Astuacatur
Tapié, Michel 459*n*25
Tavernier, Jean-Baptiste 417
Tavernier, Melchior: celestial map 440*n*34
al-Tawzari, Abu al-Fadl Yusuf ibn Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn al-Nahwi: commentary on *al-Qasidah al-Munfarijah* 428
Tehran: metalworking 124, 125
thuluth script 189, 191, 444, 453, 454
Tiberias (Israel) bronze hoard 223, *224*, 236–37, 241
  boxes and box lids 232–33, 240–41, 243, 248, 249
  decoration/designs 235–36
  furniture fittings 225, 234–35
  hinges 240, 241
  incense-burner 227, *228*, *230*
  iron objects 225
  jewellery 235
  kitchenware 224–25, *230*, 233–34
  lampstands/lighting devices 224, *225*, 225–27, 291
  stirrups 225, 235
  sword quillons 225, 235
  tableware/vessels 224, 228–33, *229*, *230*, *232*, 236, 242
Timur 89, 265
tin-glaze ceramics
  Iraqi 352
  Puebla/'Talavera' 363–68, 374
  see also Talavera de la Reyna
tinners/tinsmiths 267, 272, *273*
Tirafkan, Sadegh 456
tiraz textiles 258, *258*, 259, 260, 262
  dating 258–59
Toghrul Beg, Seljuk sultan 220, 221
Toledo, Francisco 371
Tomkins, C. 465
'tooth with toothworms' ('modern palimpsest') 428, 437, Plate 27
Topkapı Album 90
Topkapı Palace Library: *Jami' al-tawarikh* of Rashid al-Din 93, *93*
Toronto: Aga Khan Museum lampstand 289, 290, 291
Toscano, Alejandro Moreno 370
trays
  bronze (Fatimid; from Tiberias) 224, 231, *232*
  made for Amir Qulunjaq 41
  made for Sultan Dawud, Rasulid ruler of Yemen (r.1296–1322) 190, 191–92
  made for Sultan Isma'il ibn Muhammad (signed by Hamid ibn 'Abdallah ibn 'Abd al-Qadir) 192, *193*
  made for al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Dunya wa'l-Din Yusuf I 41
  Mamluk (made for Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun or Sultan Hasan, 1330–60) 187, *188*, 188–90, 191, 192–94, 197, 198, Plates 7, 8
  made for Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun (1320–41) 190–91, *191*, 192
Treviso Cathedral: Mamluk basin 203
Trinidad, La ('Talavera' workshop) 366, 368, 375
Tukharistan 100, 102
  coinage/mints 100, 101–2, 109, 110
Tunis: *jami'* 156
Tusi Salmani: *'Aja'ib-nama* 95

'Umar ibn Hajji Jaldak 72*n*60, *see* Ibn Jaldak
'Umar ibn Khidr al-Maliki al-Badri 72*n*69
'Umar Khayyam: quatrains 404
Umayyads 313
  caliphs 228, 337
  copper coinage 114*n*16
Uriarte Talavera 373, 375
Usama bin Munqidh 400
Uways, Jalayrid sultan (r.1356–74) 93, 95

Valencia (Spain): Museo de Bellas Artes San Pío V: lampstand fragment 290
'value' of objects 338–39, 343–45
Van de Put, A. 201
Vatican Museum: bronze ewer (9th–10th c.) 228–29
Vēlijanean, Petros 416
Vēlijanean, Połos (merchant) 415–16, 423
Veran, T'anri *see* Astuacatur
Verdi Khan, Shah 420
Vesalius, Andreas: *De humani corporis fabrica* 432

Victoria and Albert Museum, London 77*n*106, 194–95, 196–98, 302
Andalusi ivory caskets 302, 310, *310*, 311–12
Ayyubid flask 182*n*4
box for al-Malik al-'Adil II 71*n*49
casket inlaid with silver and gold (*c*.1300) 90, *90*
chauris 150
Chinese ceramics 352, *352*
al-Hakam pyxis 303, 305, 308–9, *309*, 310
inlaid brass bowl (with titles of Sultan Uways) 93, 94
Iraqi ceramics 352, *353*, 357, *358*
ivory plaque 302
lampstand with bird (fragment) 290
Mamluk brass tray (made for Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun or Sultan Hasan 187, *188*, 188–90, 191, 192–94, 197, 198, Plates 7, 8
Mamluk enamelled glass bottle 174
pyxis made for Ziyad ibn Aflah 303, 313, 316*n*41
qingbai ware ewer 398
textiles 253
tray for Badr al-Din Lu'lu' 24, 73*n*74
Villa Sánchez, Juan 363
Vogelsang-Eastwood, Gillian 254

Walters Art Museum, Baltimore
basin 41
ewer (Yunus ibn Yusuf, 1246–47) 26, 27, *31*, 33
Ward, Rachel 133, 194
Waring, Edward Scott 125
Warzée, Dorothée de 125
Welch, Anthony 442–43
Whipple Museum of the History of Science, Cambridge: 'modern palimpsests' 428–29, *429*, 432–34, *433*
Whitworth Gallery, Manchester: embroideries 253
Wiet, Gaston 15, 219
William I, of Sicily 295
Wuchters, Daniel 421
Wulff, Hans 126, 268, 271, 277
Wyatt, Matthew Digby 197

XRF (X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy) analysis 117, 203, 302, 309, 311, 316*n*41

Y-fret pattern 41
Yalbugha al-'Umari al-Nasiri 177
Ya'qub ibn Layth al-Saffar, ruler of Sistan 134
Yazd (Iran): *jami'* 165
Yemen 16, 17, 347*n*28
swords 274
see also Rasulids of Yemen
Yovhaneanc', Tēr: *History of New Julfa* 415–16
Yuan dynasty: blue-and-white porcelain 360
Yunus al-Dawadar: blazon 183*n*13
Yunus ibn Yusuf al-Mawsili 32, *35*
ewer (Walters Art Museum, 1246–47) 26, 27, *31*, 33

Zaman, Muhammad 422
'Turktazi and the Queen of the Faeries, Turktaz' 422, Plate 26
Zamora pyxis 303, 305, *308*, 308–9, 310, 311, 315*n*27
Zane coat of arms 194, 198
Zaydan ibn Isma'il 318
al-Zayyani (historian) 320
Zenderoudi, Charles Hossein 443, 446, 447, 459*n*35, 462
Untitled 446, Plate 29
Zhejiang (China): green-glazed wares 351
Zirid Ifriqiya 293
Ziyad ibn Aflah pyxis 303, 313
Zozaya, Juan 289, 290